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RSPB first book of
the seashore

Derek Niemann



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The seashore

The seashore is a great place for playing
in the sand and splashing in the sea. It's
a wonderful place to see wildlife too. You
can pick up lots of shells on the beach.
But what creatures live in them? What
can you find hiding in the rock pools?

This book will help you name many of
the creatures living at the seashore. It will
tell you more about how they live and
where you might find them.

At the back of this book is a Spotter's
Guide to help you remember the things
you find at the seashore. You could also
write them down or draw pictures.

Turn the page to find out more about
seashore wildlife!

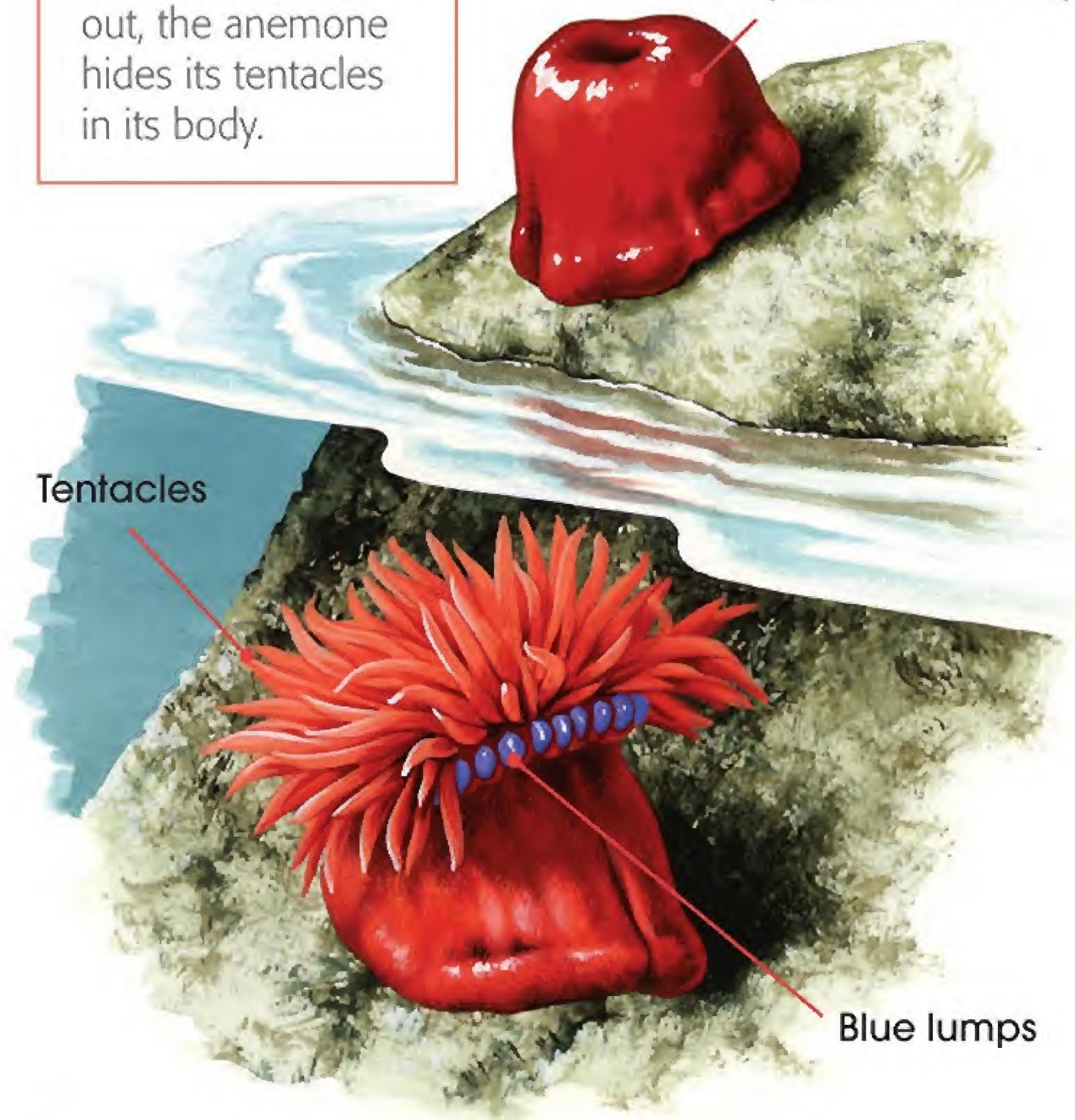


Anemone

This animal has tentacles. It catches tiny creatures in the water. If one gets too close, the anemone stings it with its tentacles. The stings don't hurt us though.

When the tide goes out, the anemone hides its tentacles in its body.

Anemone
(ah-nem-oh-nee)



Tentacles

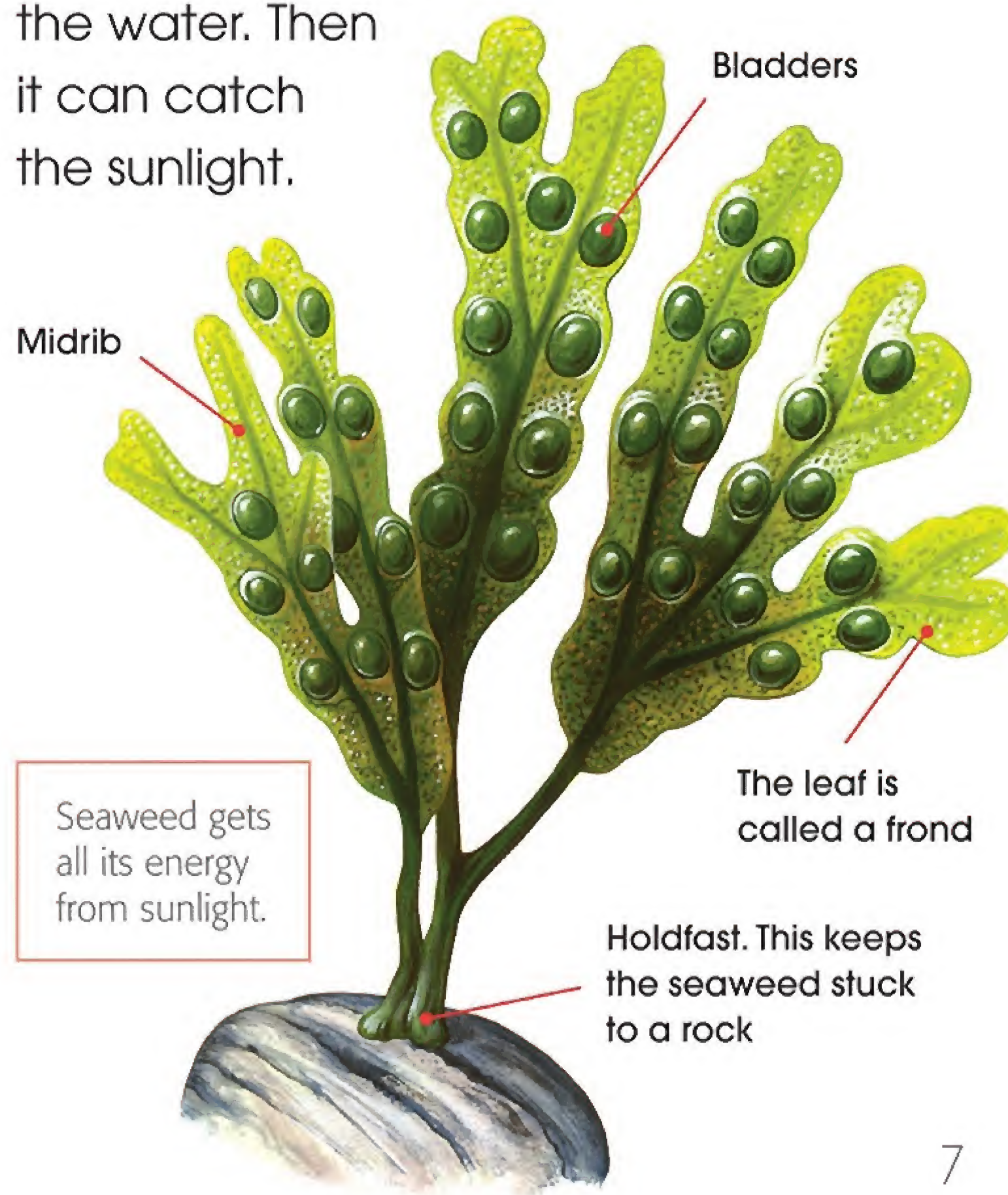
Blue lumps



Bladder wrack

This seaweed is easy to spot. Look for its pea-sized bladders. They are filled with gas so that the seaweed can float in the water. Then it can catch the sunlight.

Look out for different kinds of seaweed. It can be brown, green or red.



Bladders

Midrib

The leaf is called a frond

Seaweed gets all its energy from sunlight.

Holdfast. This keeps the seaweed stuck to a rock



Cowrie shell

Look for these tiny shells on the beach. They have lots of ridges and a long slit down the middle that looks like a mouth. The shell belongs to an underwater snail called a cowrie.

In some countries, cowries used to be used as money.

Cream-coloured

Deep ridges

Opening where the snail lived inside



Turnstone

You may see a little light and dark bird turning stones and seaweed over on the seashore. The turnstone is looking for crabs, shellfish and shrimps that live under stones.

Look out for turnstones close to the water's edge.

Dark brown and black on top

Short beak

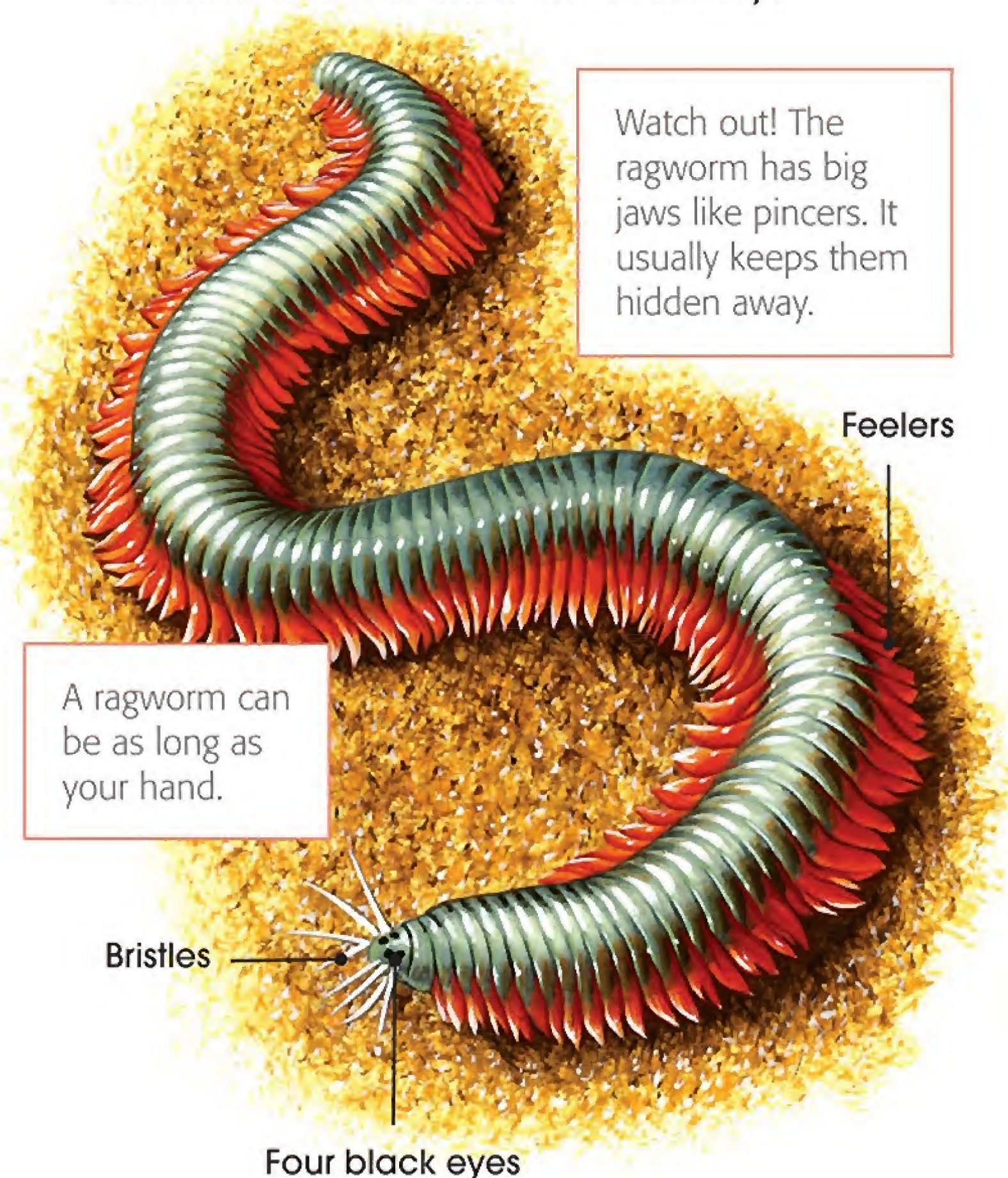
Light underneath





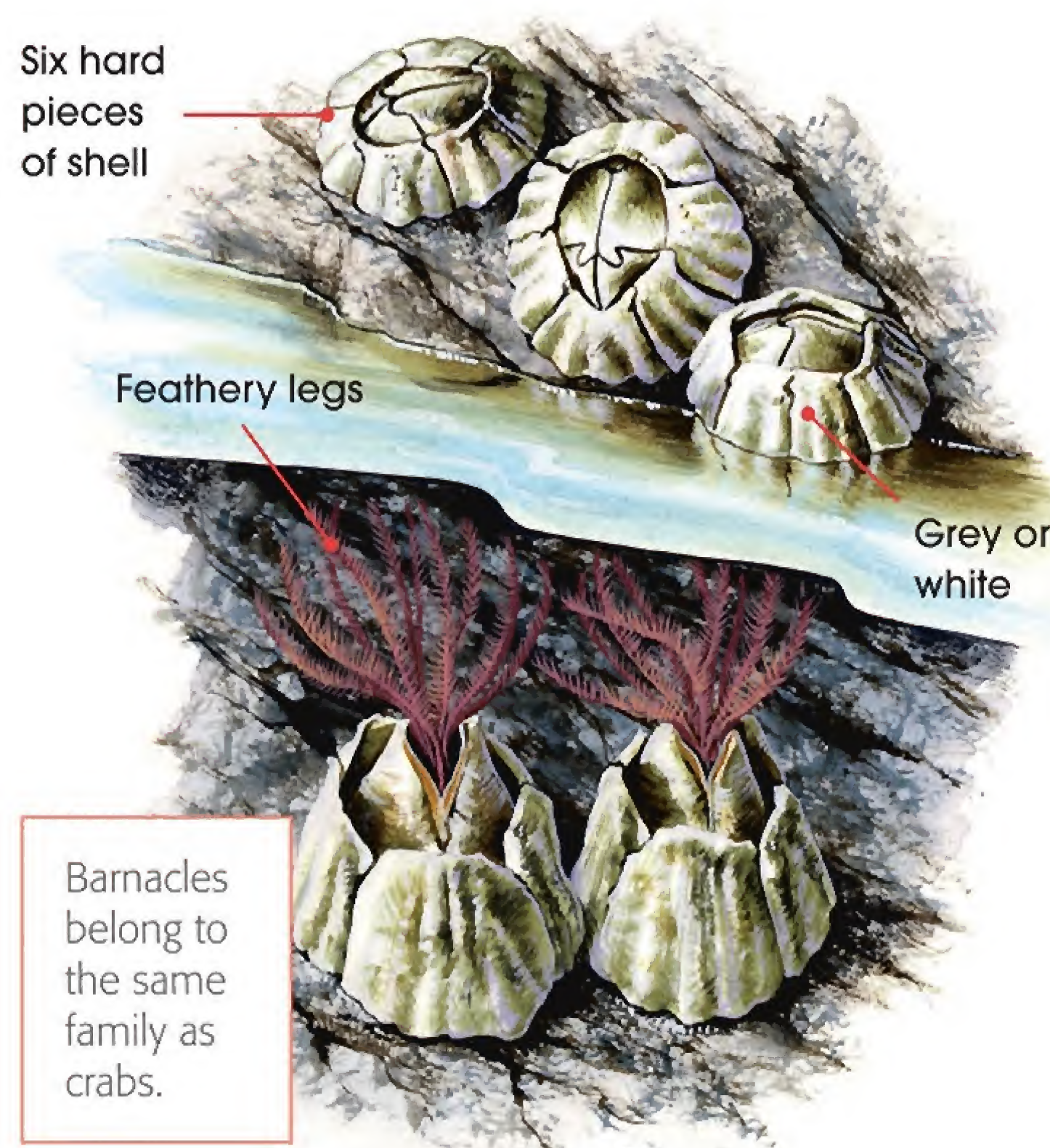
Ragworm

All sorts of worms live on the seashore. A ragworm swims or crawls about looking for things to eat. It has hairy bristles on the side of its body.



Acorn barnacle

Barnacles look like tiny volcanoes. Lots of them are stuck together on the rocks. When the tide comes in, a barnacle waves its feathery legs out of the hole at the top. It catches tiny animals floating past.

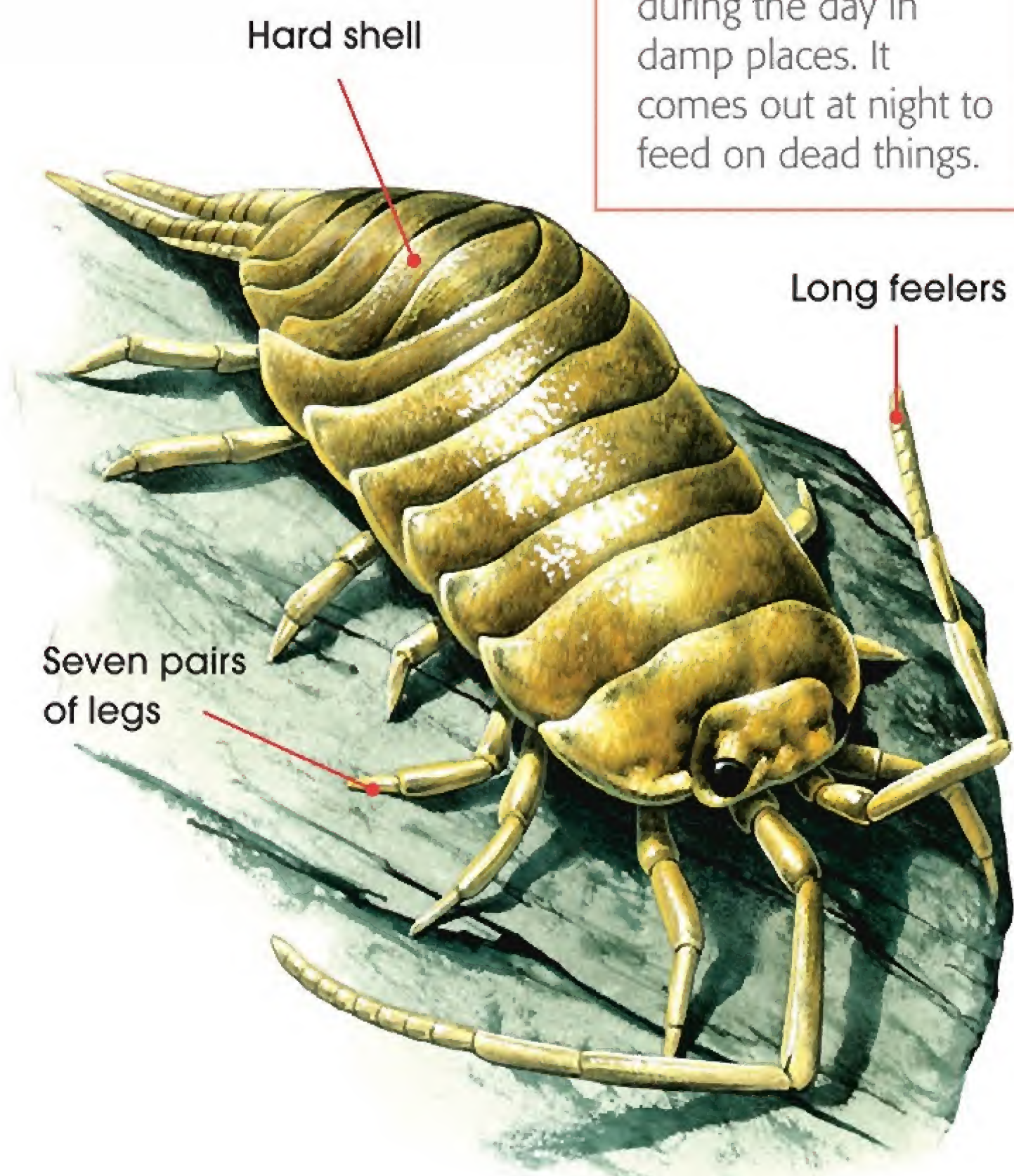




Sea slater

If you lift up a stone, you might find a sea slater. It has a very flat body, so it can squeeze into narrow spaces like a woodlouse.

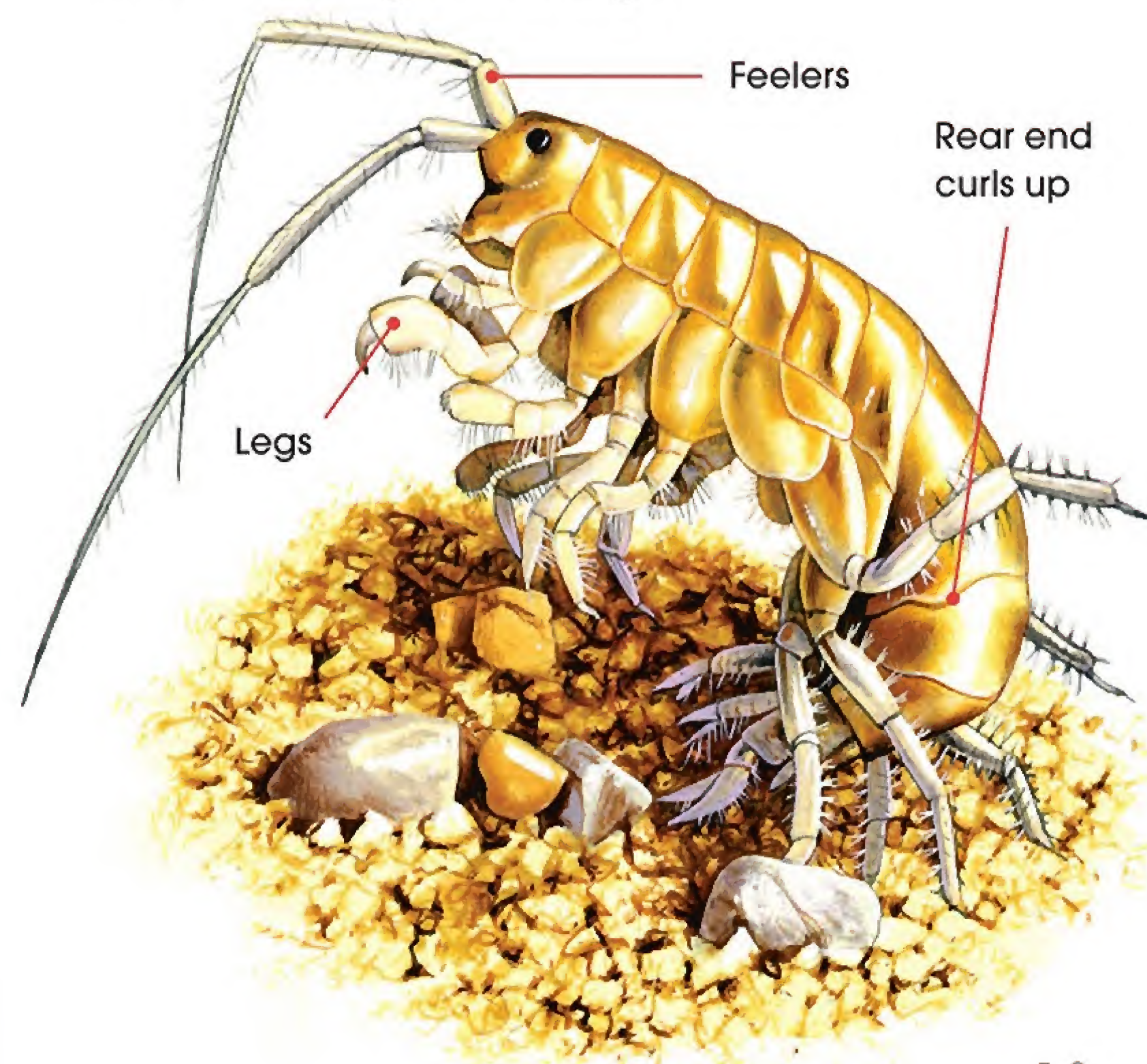
The sea slater hides during the day in damp places. It comes out at night to feed on dead things.



Sand hopper

What are the little creatures jumping about as you stand on old seaweed? They are sand hoppers. Watch them spring away on their long back legs.

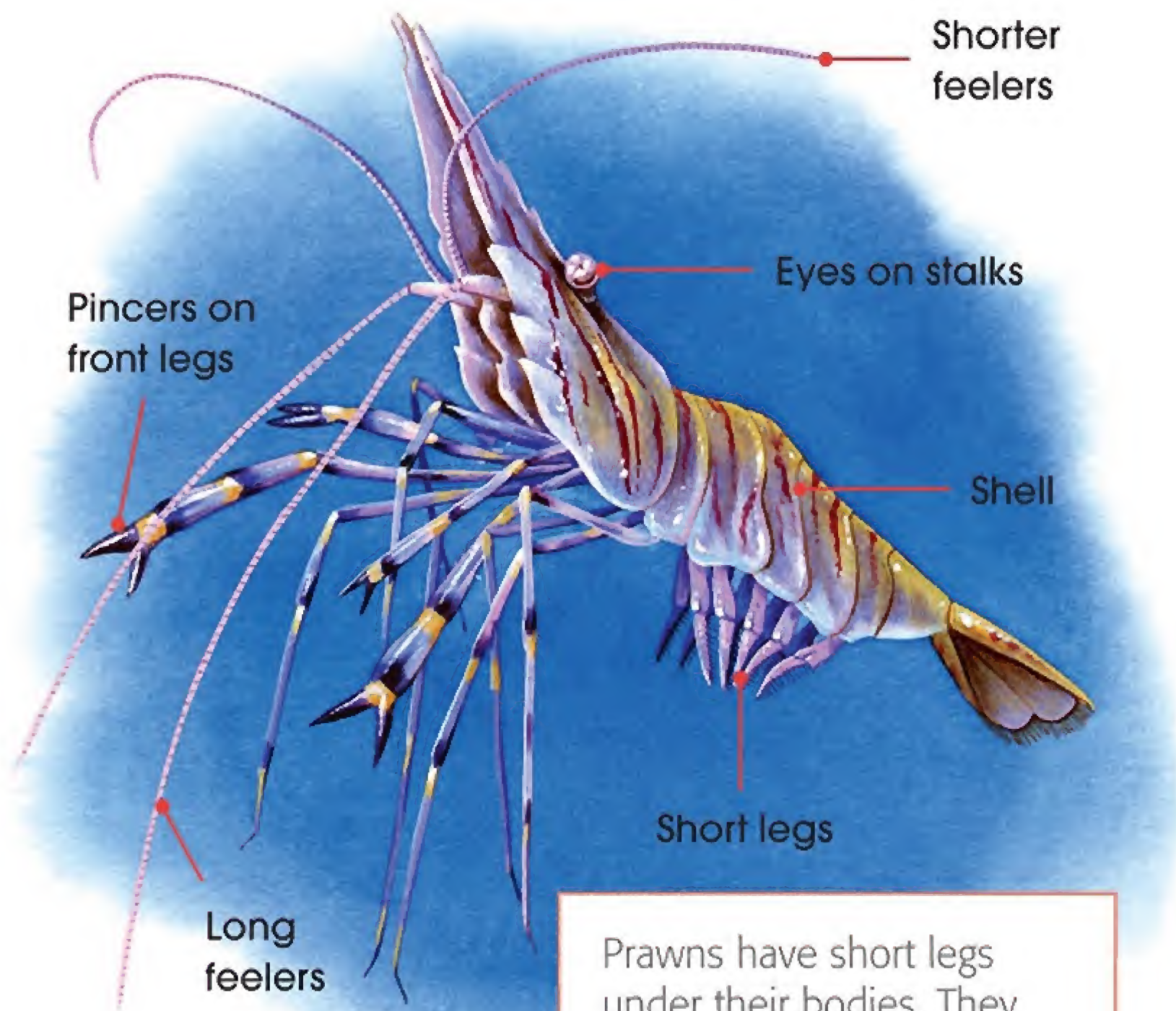
Look for sand hoppers on the 'strandline'. This is where the sea washes things up.





Common prawn

Many rockpools have prawns in them. They are almost see-through, so they are hard to spot. Watch one walking along the bottom of the pool, picking up food.



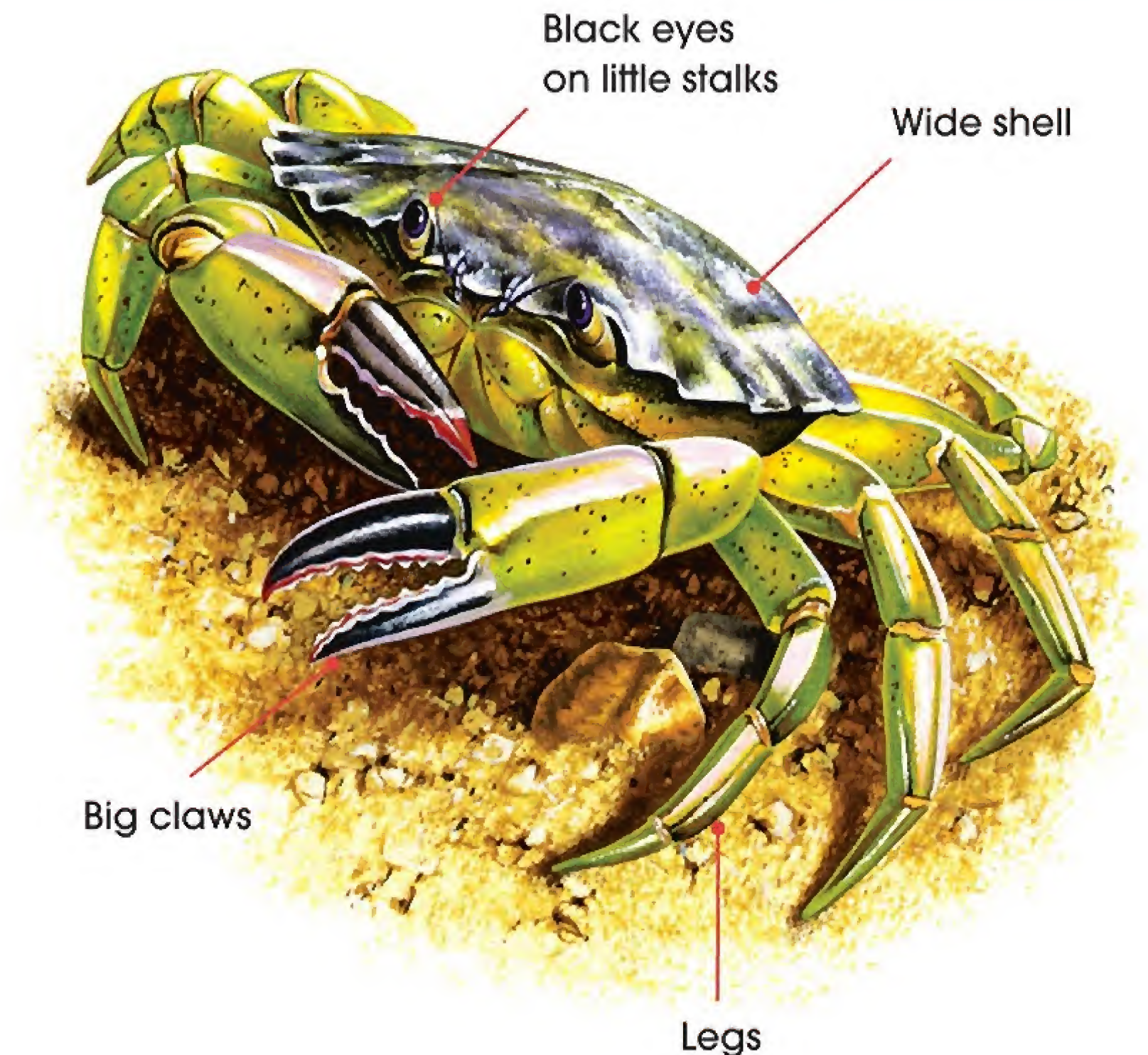
Prawns have short legs under their bodies. They are like paddles and they help prawns swim very fast.

Shore crab



Crabs have big claws, a hard shell and little dark eyes on stalks. They hide under stones in rockpools. When they come out, they walk sideways.

When a hunter grabs a crab by the claw, the crab can let it break off. It can grow a new claw.

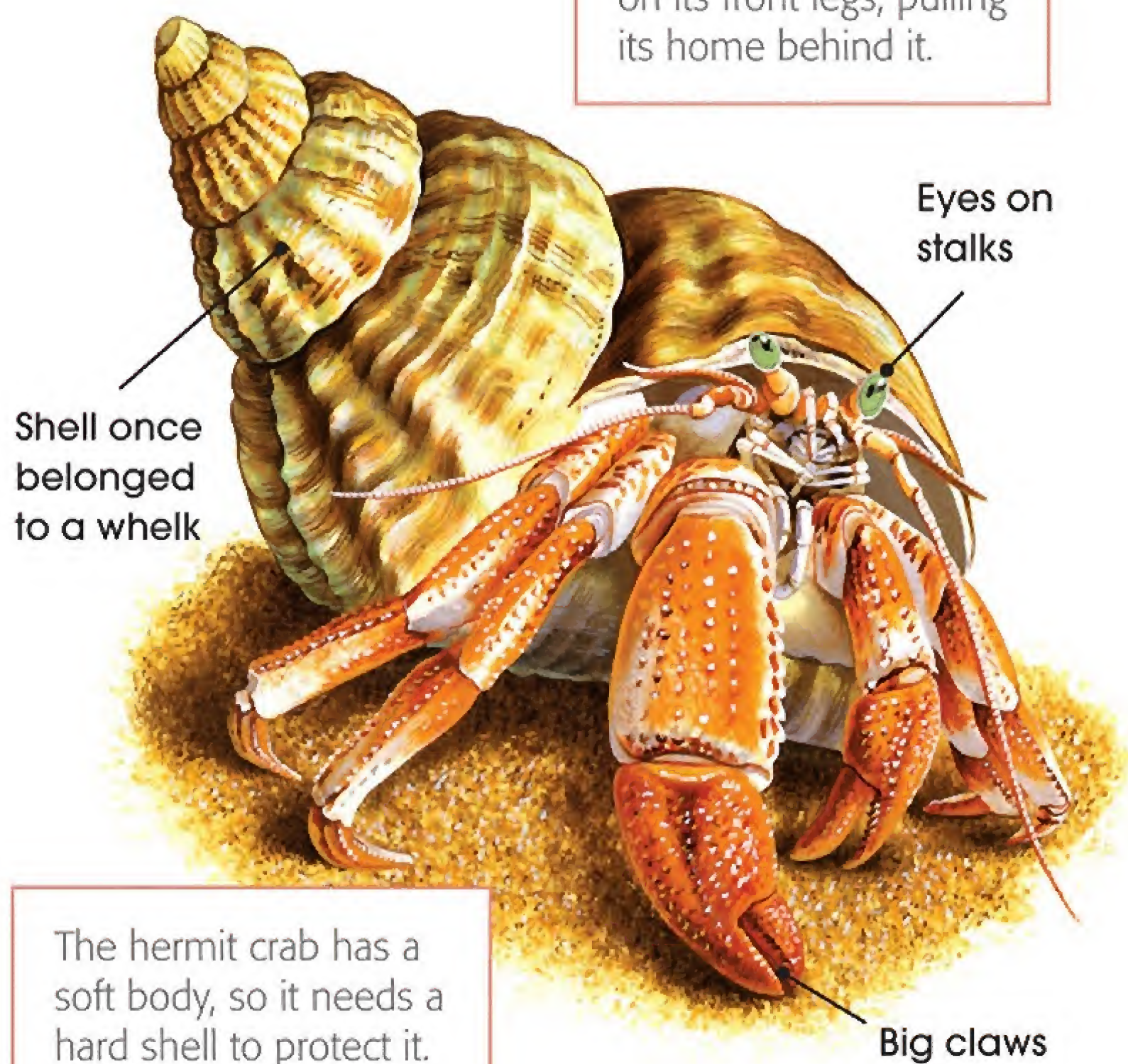




Hermit crab

This crab doesn't grow a shell of its own. It finds the empty shell of another creature and lives inside it. When it grows too big, it has to find a larger one.

The hermit crab walks on its front legs, pulling its home behind it.

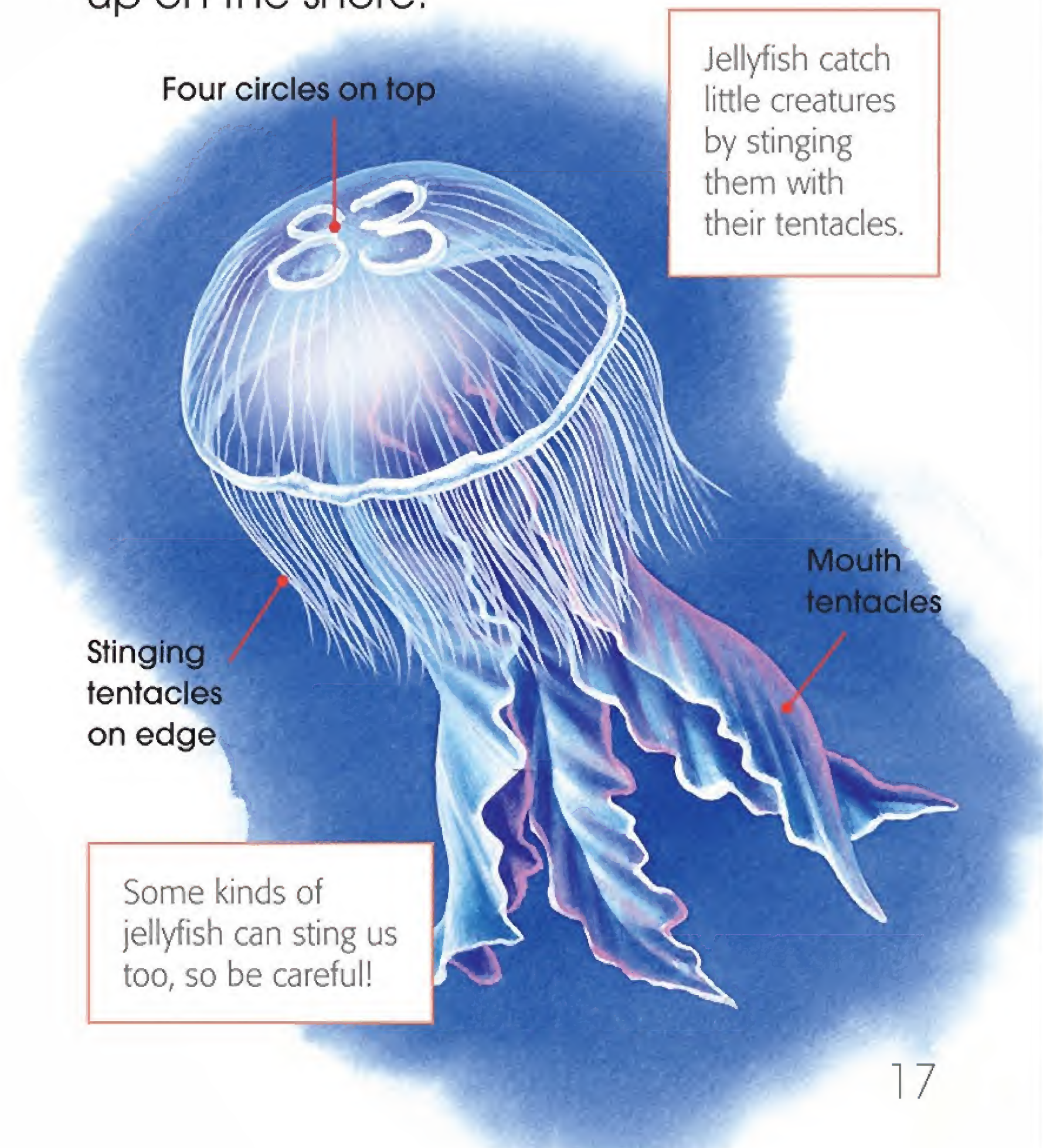


The hermit crab has a soft body, so it needs a hard shell to protect it.



Common jellyfish

This strange-looking animal has a body that looks like an umbrella. It spends most of its life floating out at sea. You may see a common jellyfish washed up on the shore.



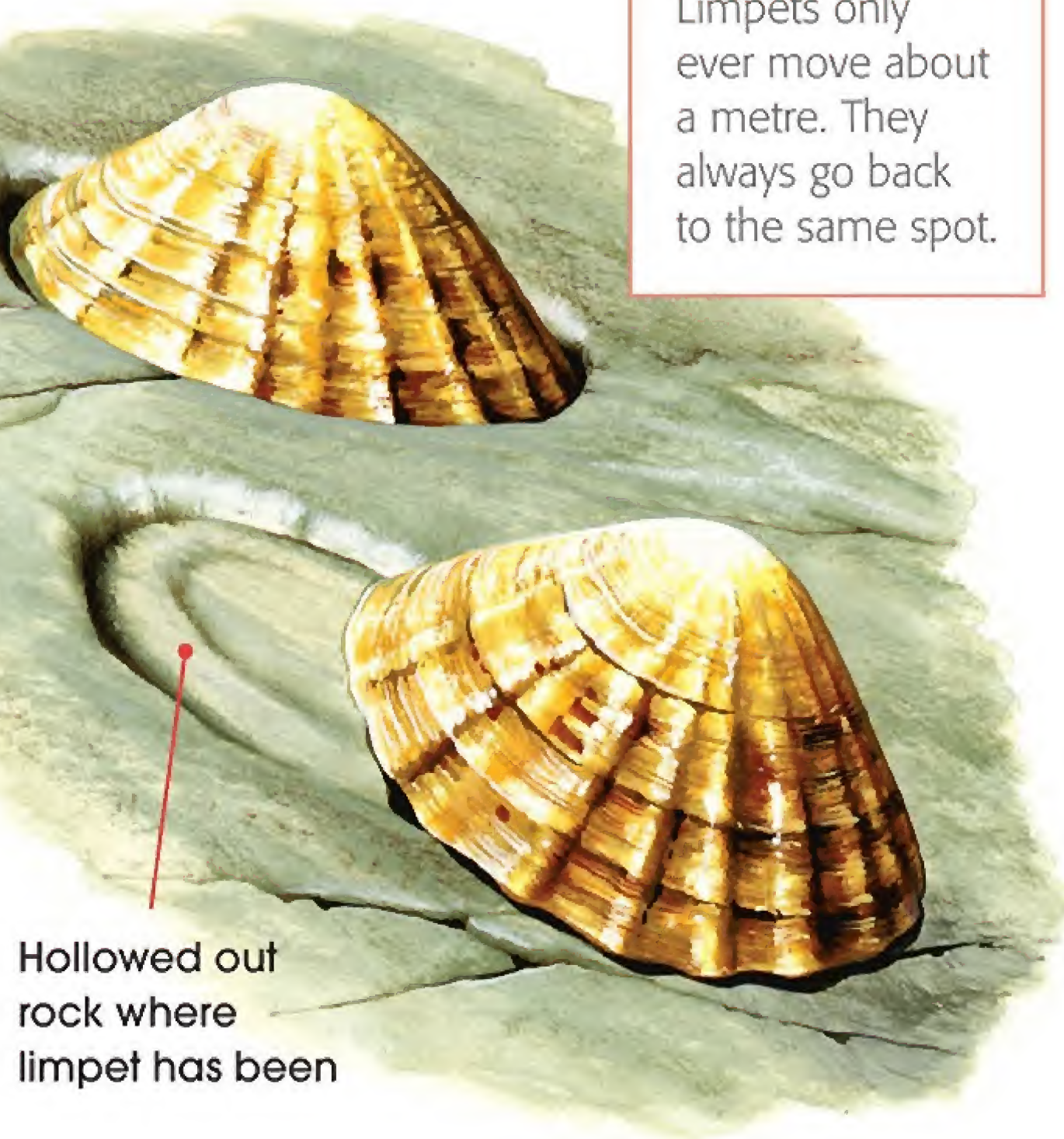
Some kinds of jellyfish can sting us too, so be careful!



Common limpet

When a limpet is stuck to a rock, nobody can move it! At night, or when the tide is in, it starts to move. It goes round its rock eating little plants called algae.

Limpets only ever move about a metre. They always go back to the same spot.



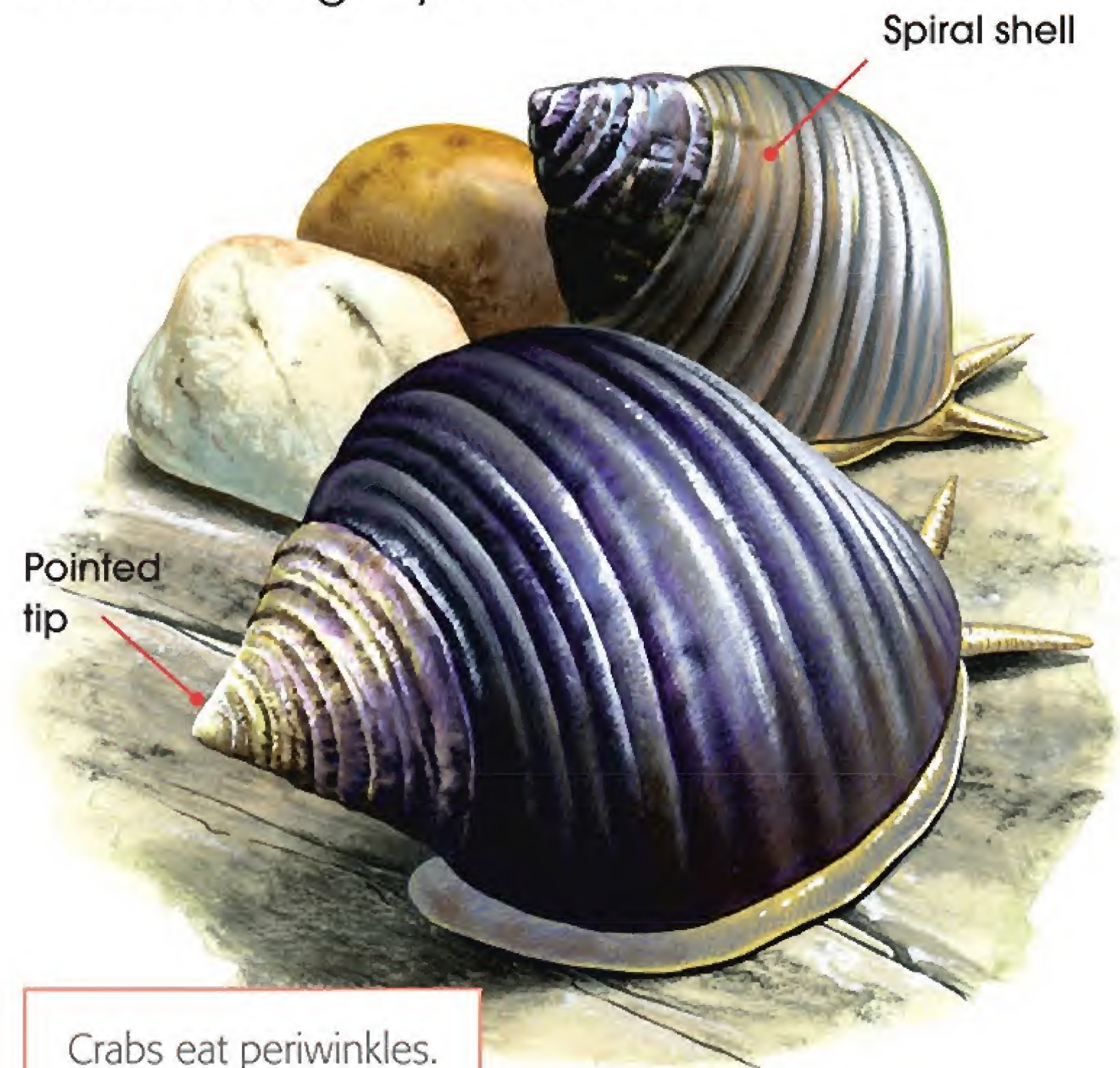
Hollowed out rock where limpet has been



Periwinkle

These tiny snails shelter in cracks in the rock. They come out to graze on seaweed when the tide is in. They can be dark blue, black or brightly-coloured.

Periwinkles are sometimes just called winkles.



Spiral shell

Pointed tip

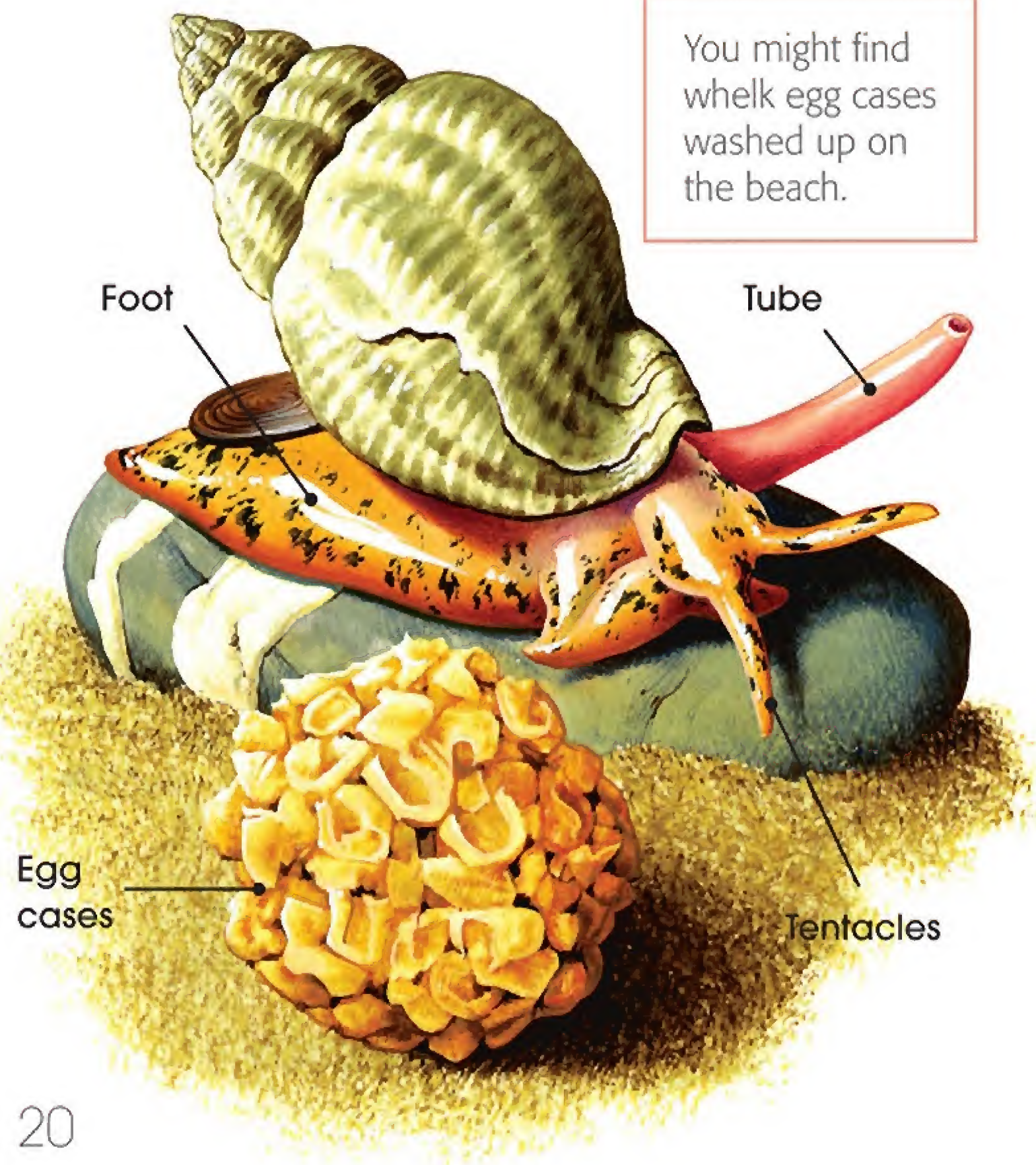
Crabs eat periwinkles. So do people!



Whelk

The whelk has a tube coming out of the shell just above its head. It uses the tube to smell its prey. It drills holes into barnacle and mussel shells and eats the animal inside.

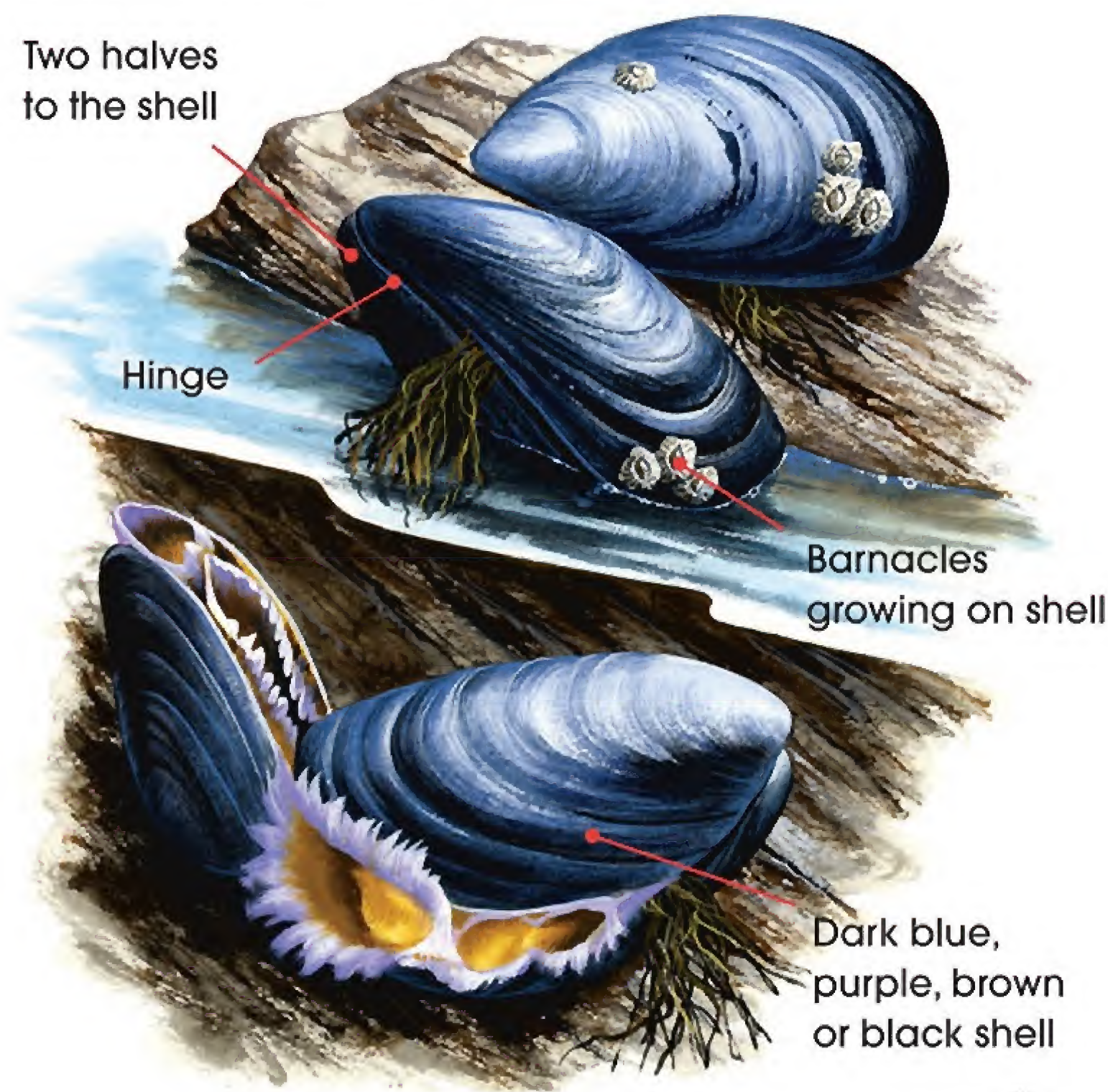
You might find whelk egg cases washed up on the beach.



Mussel

The mussel has one very strong muscle! This keeps both parts of its shell together. The mussel opens its shell a little and lets water in. Then it traps things floating in the water to eat.

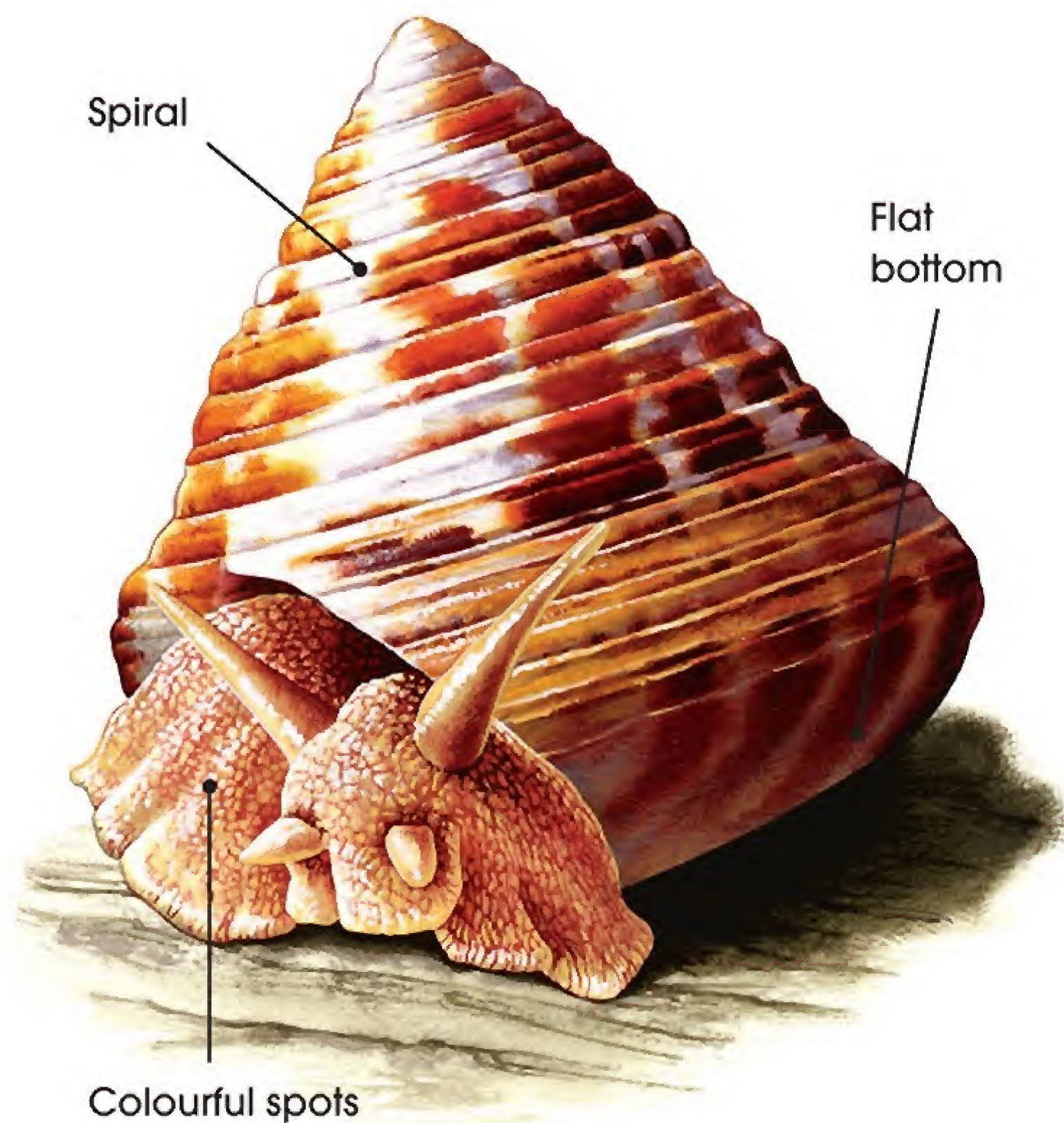
Mussels keep their shells closed when they are out of water.





Top shell

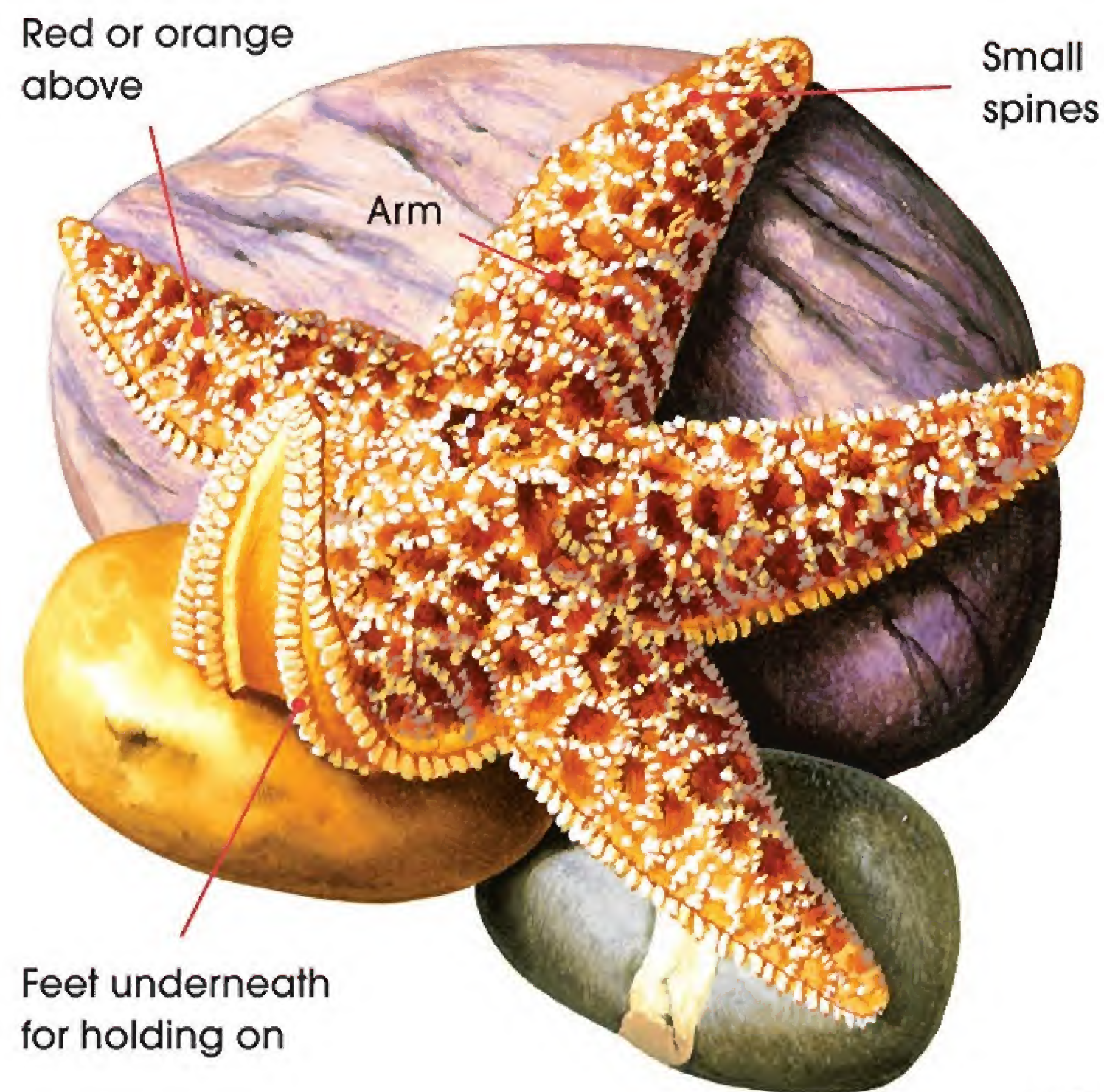
Look for top shells on the shore near the sea. They feed on green algae here. If you find an empty shell, look inside. It may be shiny and colourful.



Starfish

How many arms does a starfish have? The one in the picture has five, but they can have four, five, six or seven! Starfish hunt in rockpools and on the seabed for cockles, mussels and other shellfish.

The mouth of the starfish is underneath its body.





Common blenny

This rockpool fish can climb as well as swim. It uses the little fins underneath its body like arms. They help to pull it up through cracks in the rocks.



This type of blenny is sometimes called a shanny.

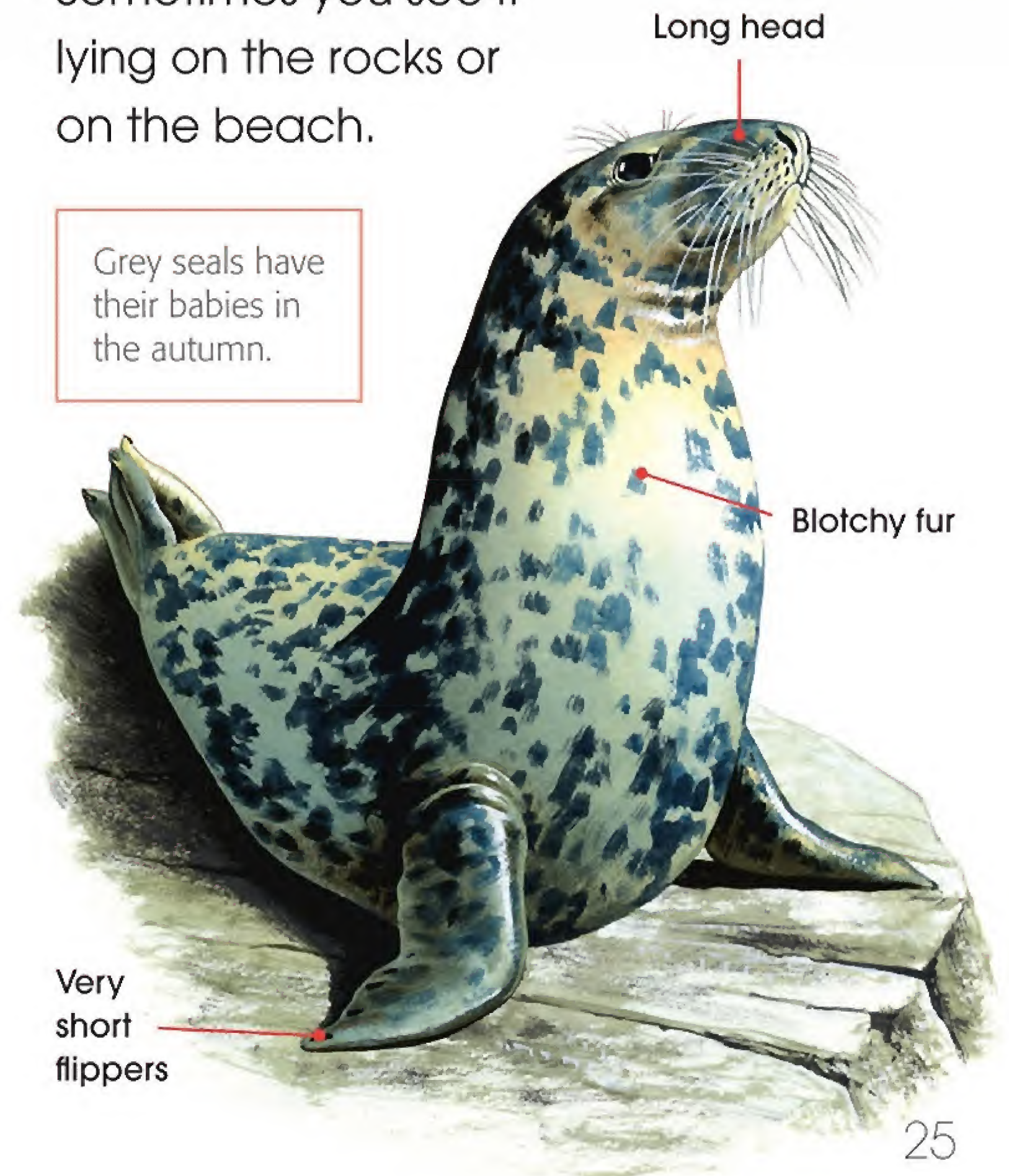
Blennies eat barnacles, tiny crabs, prawns and shrimps.



Grey seal

This is the seal you are most likely to see here. Sometimes you can spot its head in the water. Sometimes you see it lying on the rocks or on the beach.

Seals spend most of their lives in the sea. They catch fish to eat.

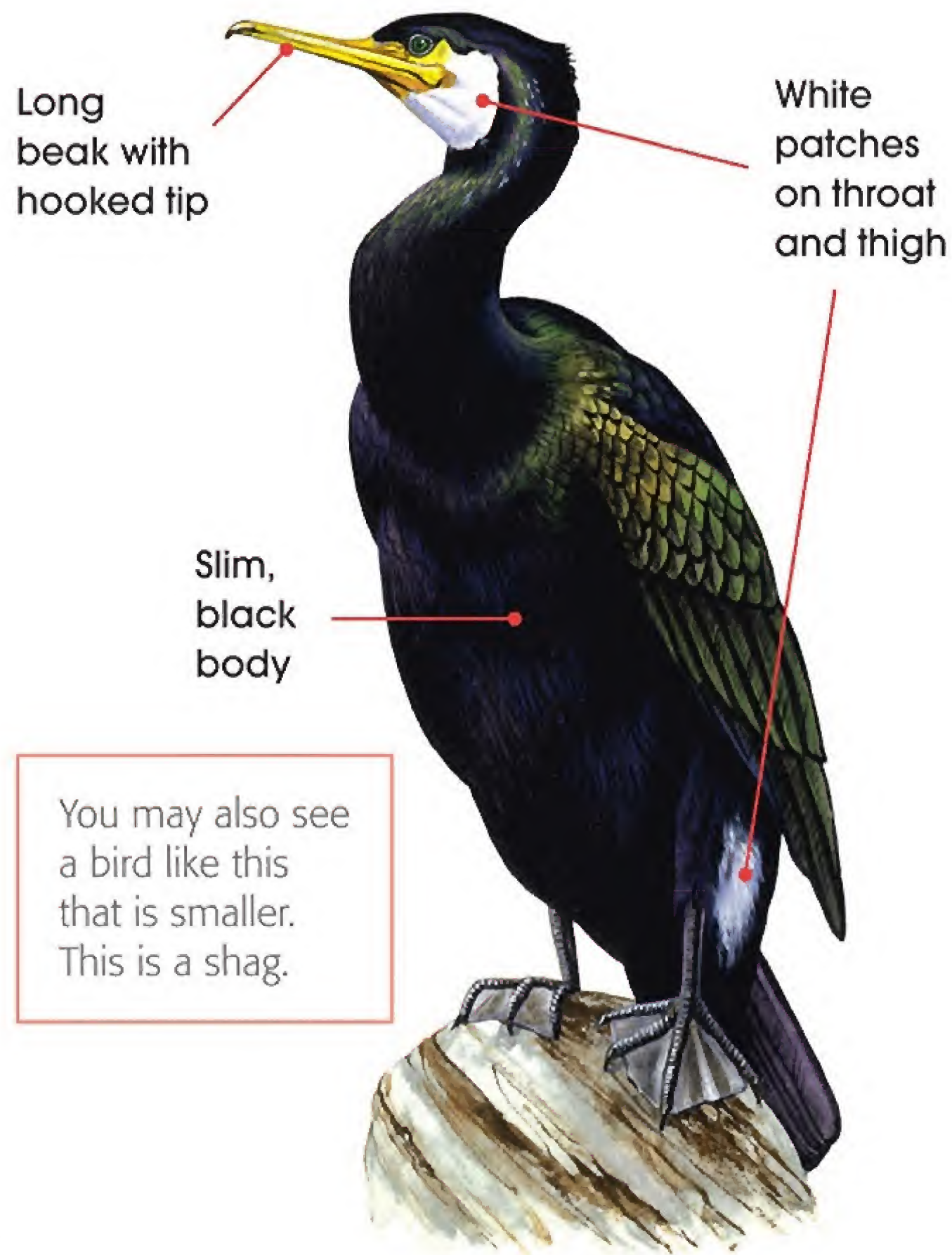


Grey seals have their babies in the autumn.



Cormorant

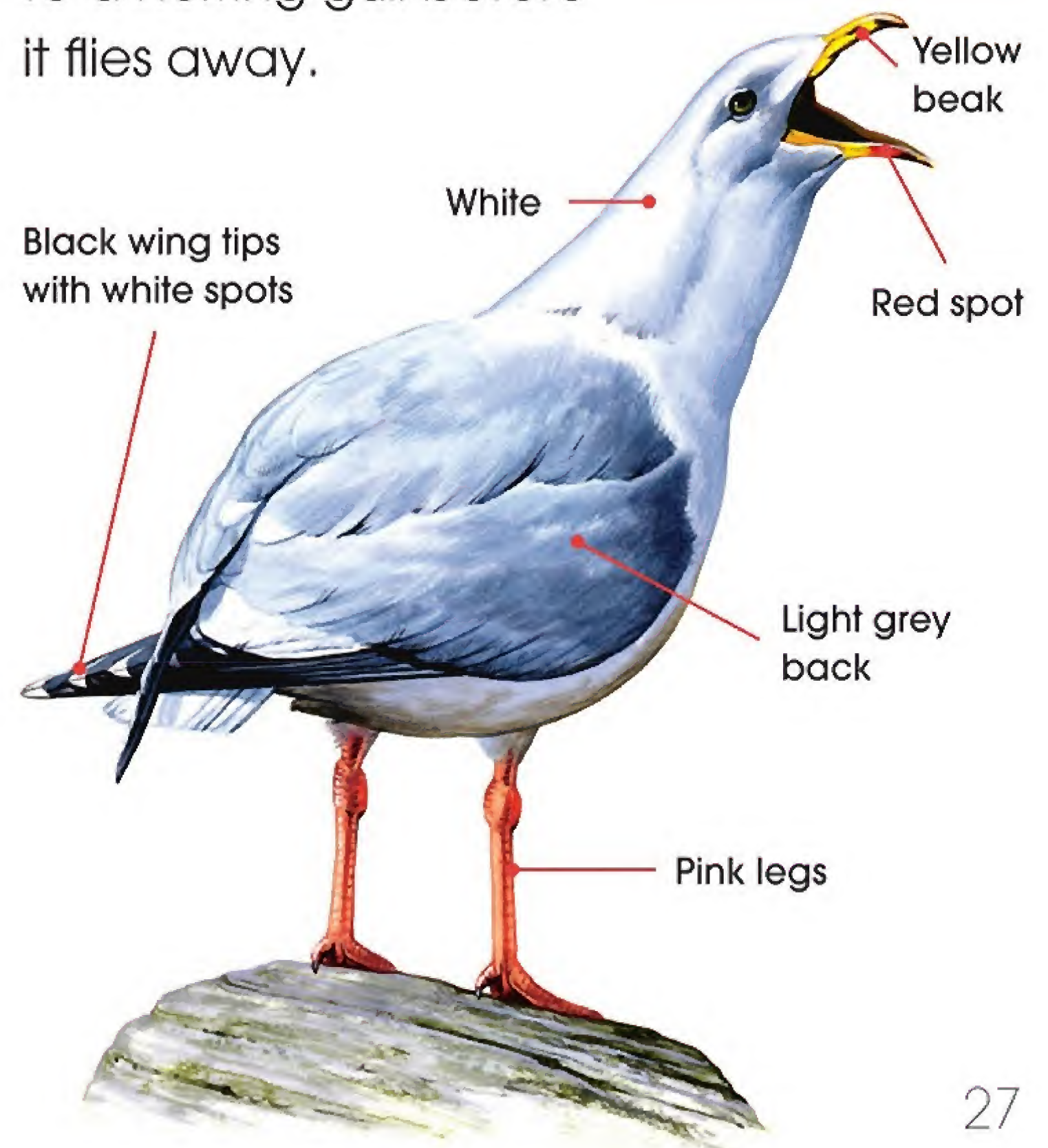
Cormorants are long, dark birds that fly close to the water. Sometimes they stand on the shore with their wings stretched out. Nobody is quite sure why they do this.



Herring gull

A bird calling loudly at the seaside is probably a herring gull. It is a big, white and grey bird with a yellow beak. You can get very close to a herring gull before it flies away.

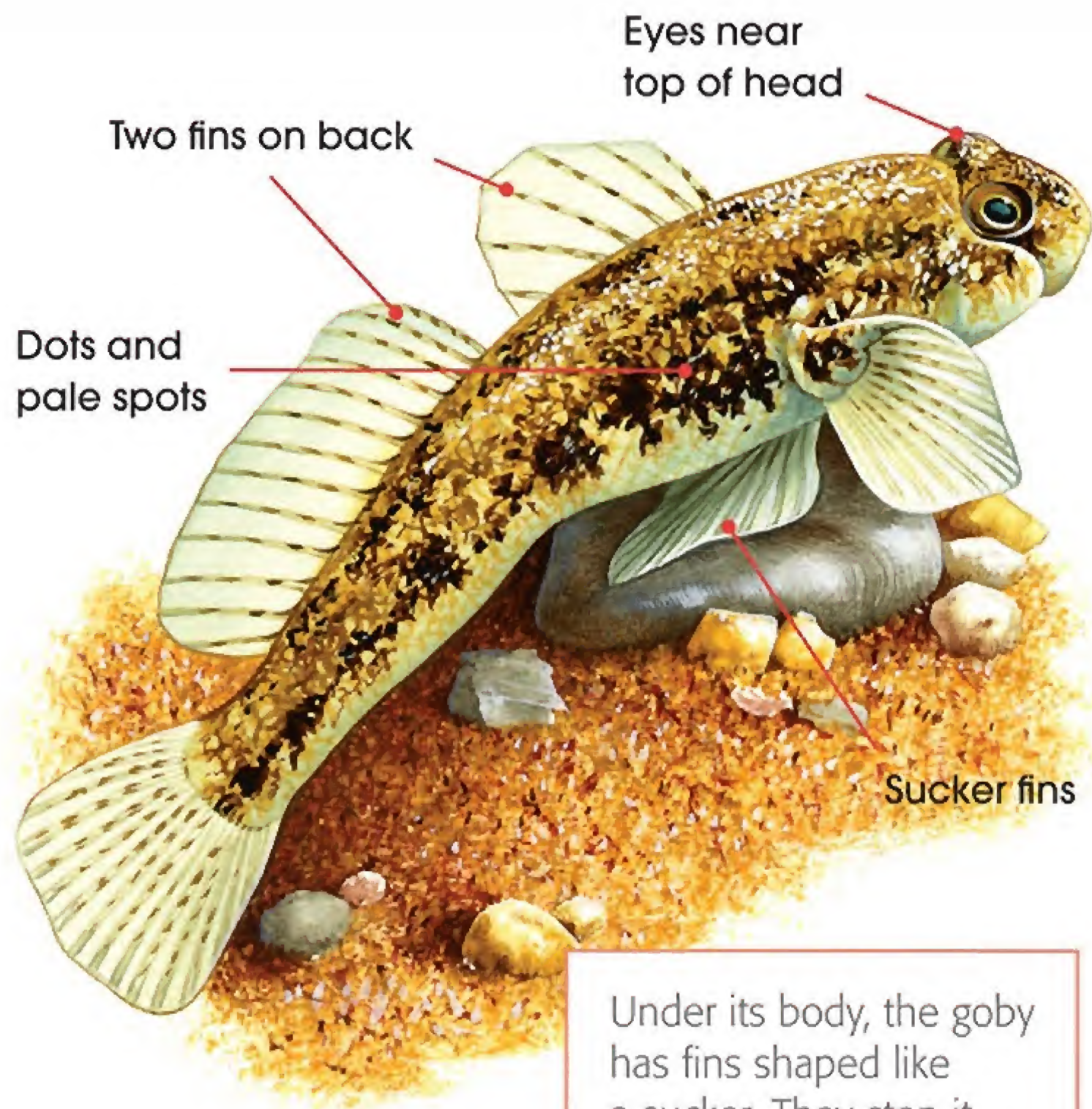
Young herring gulls peck at the red spot on their parent's beak when they are hungry. The parent then sicks up food for them!





Common goby

The goby is the same colour as the sand. It swims at the bottom of rockpools so it is very hard to spot. Look out for its little black eyes.



Under its body, the goby has fins shaped like a sucker. They stop it being swept away when the tide goes in and out.

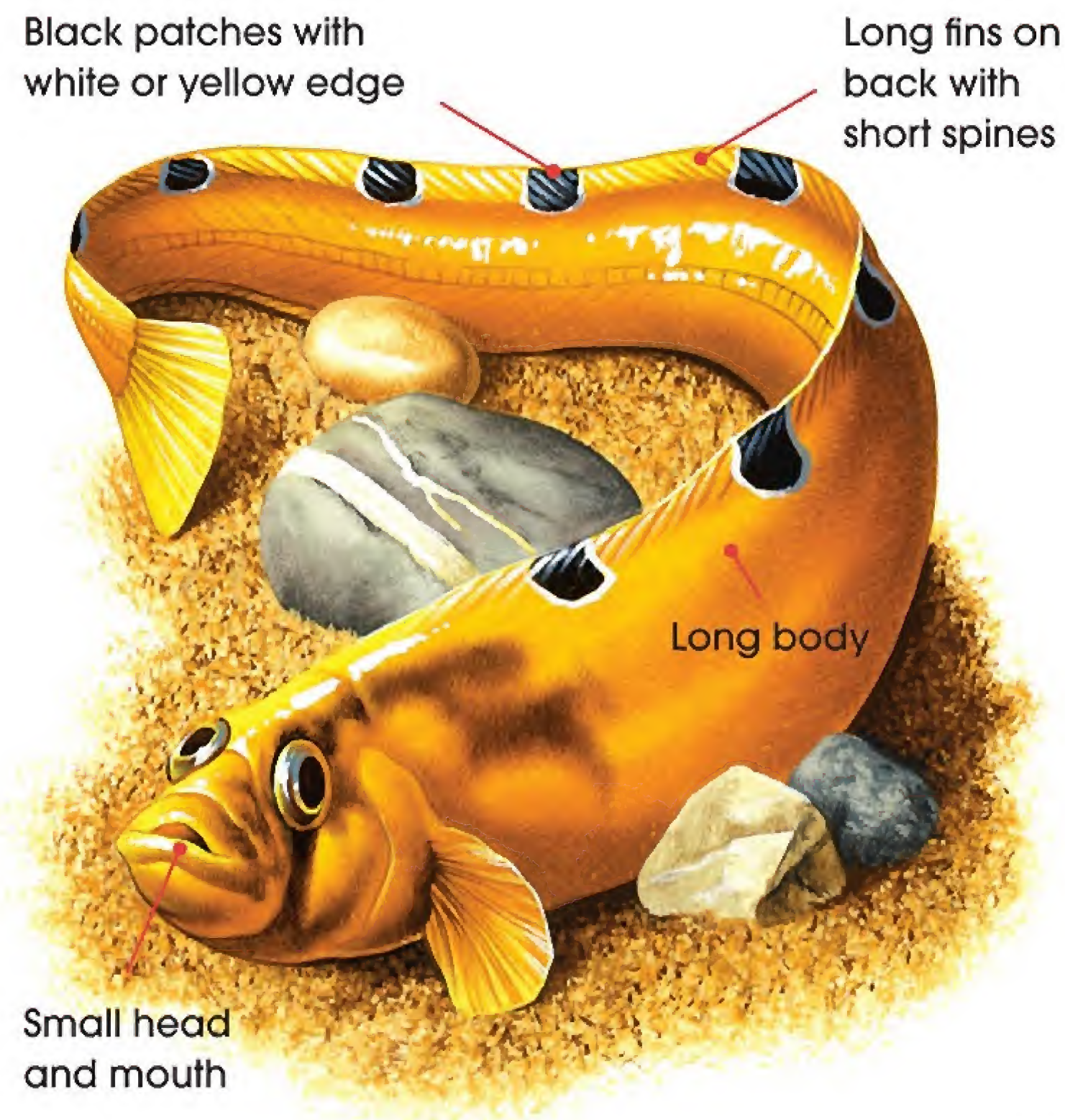


Butterfish

You might think this fish is an eel or a sea snake. It can grow up to 25 centimetres long.

The butterflyfish is a slimy, slippery fish to hold. That's how it got its name.

Butterfish often hide under stones in rockpools.





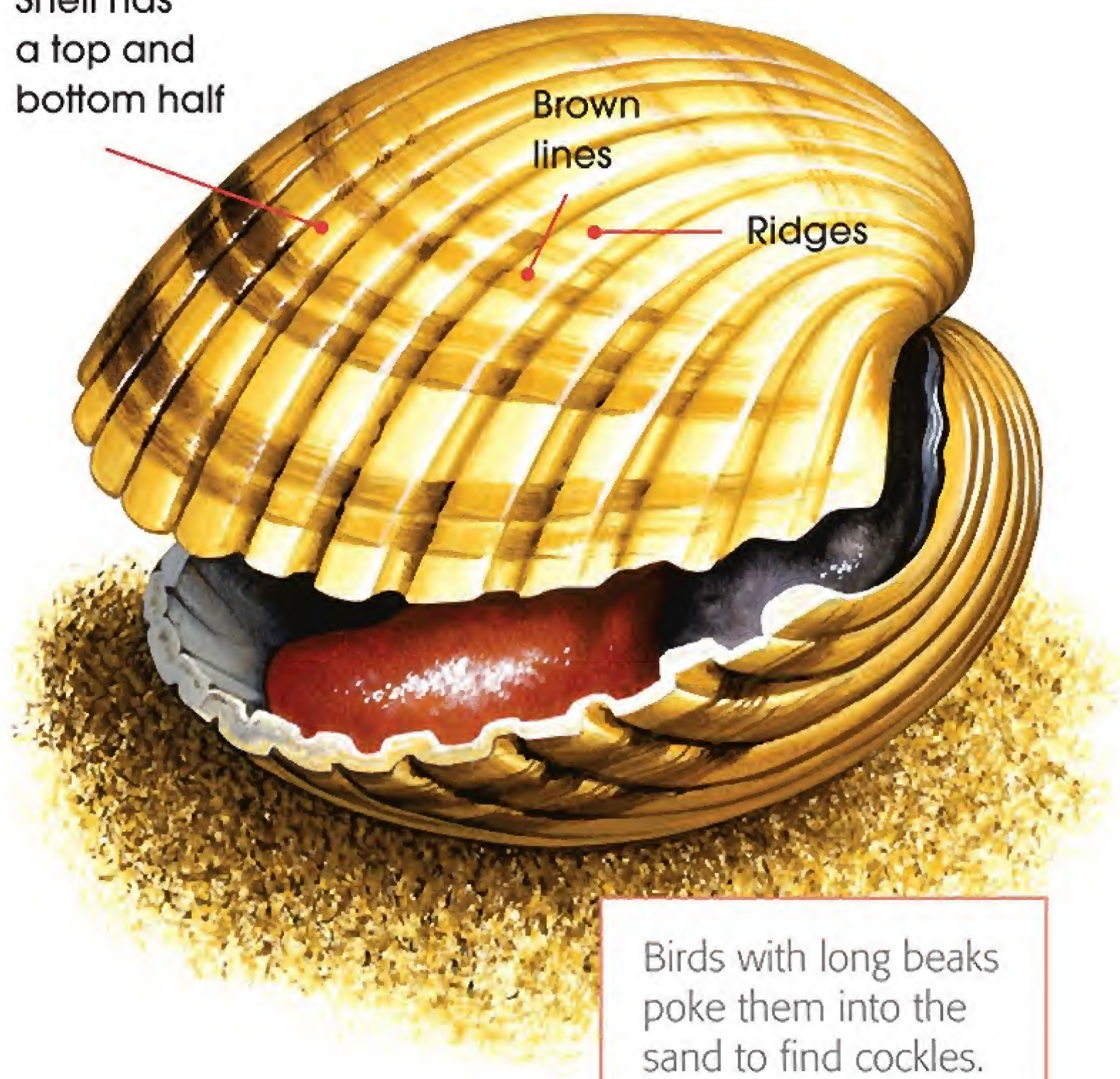
Cockle

The cockle lives in wet sand. It sucks in water through a little tube and eats tiny bits of food in the water. Then another tube squirts the water out again.

Shell has a top and bottom half

Brown lines

Ridges



Birds with long beaks poke them into the sand to find cockles.

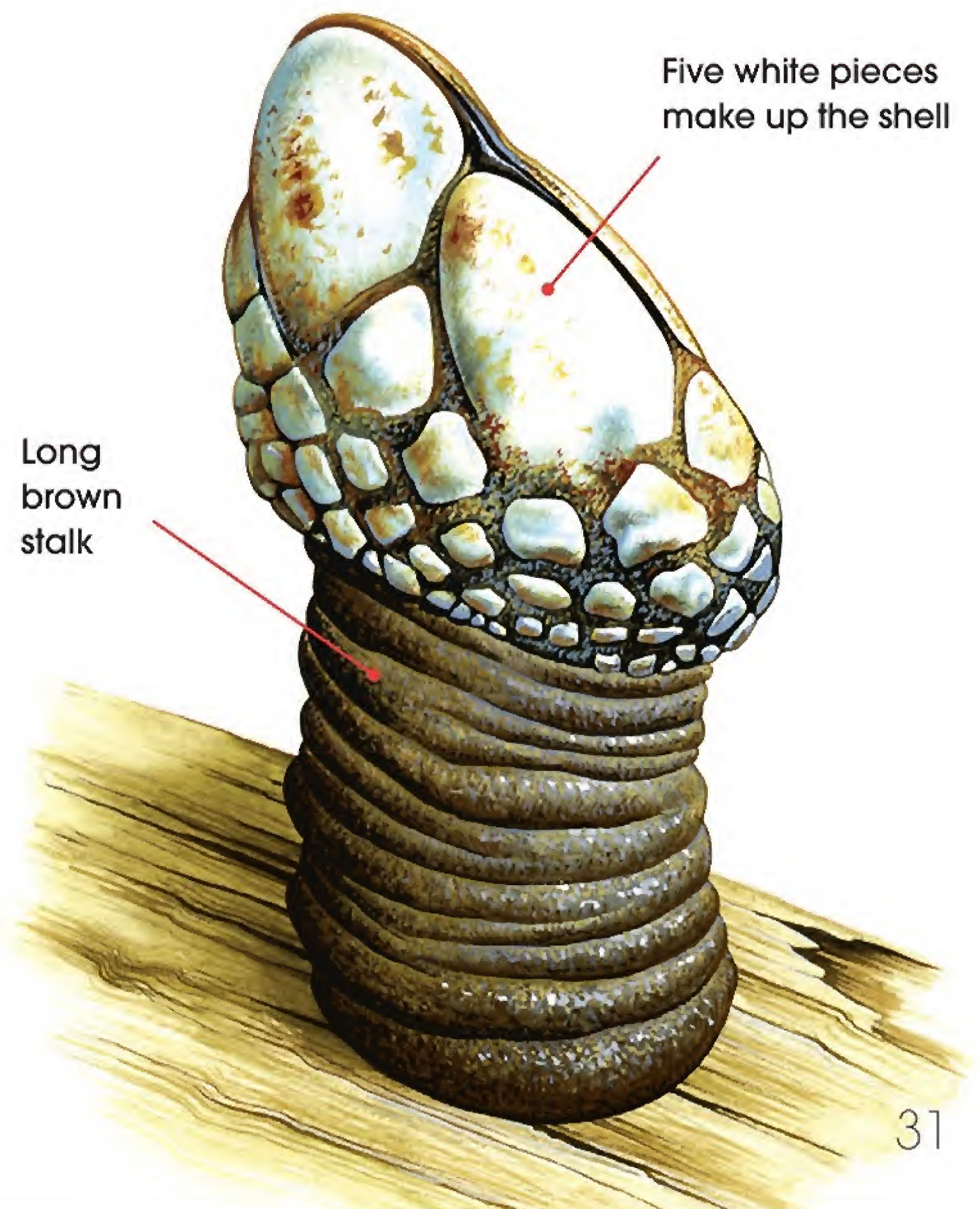


Goose barnacle

These white barnacles live far out at sea. They often stick to a floating piece of driftwood. Look for them on wood that has been washed up on the shore.

Five white pieces make up the shell

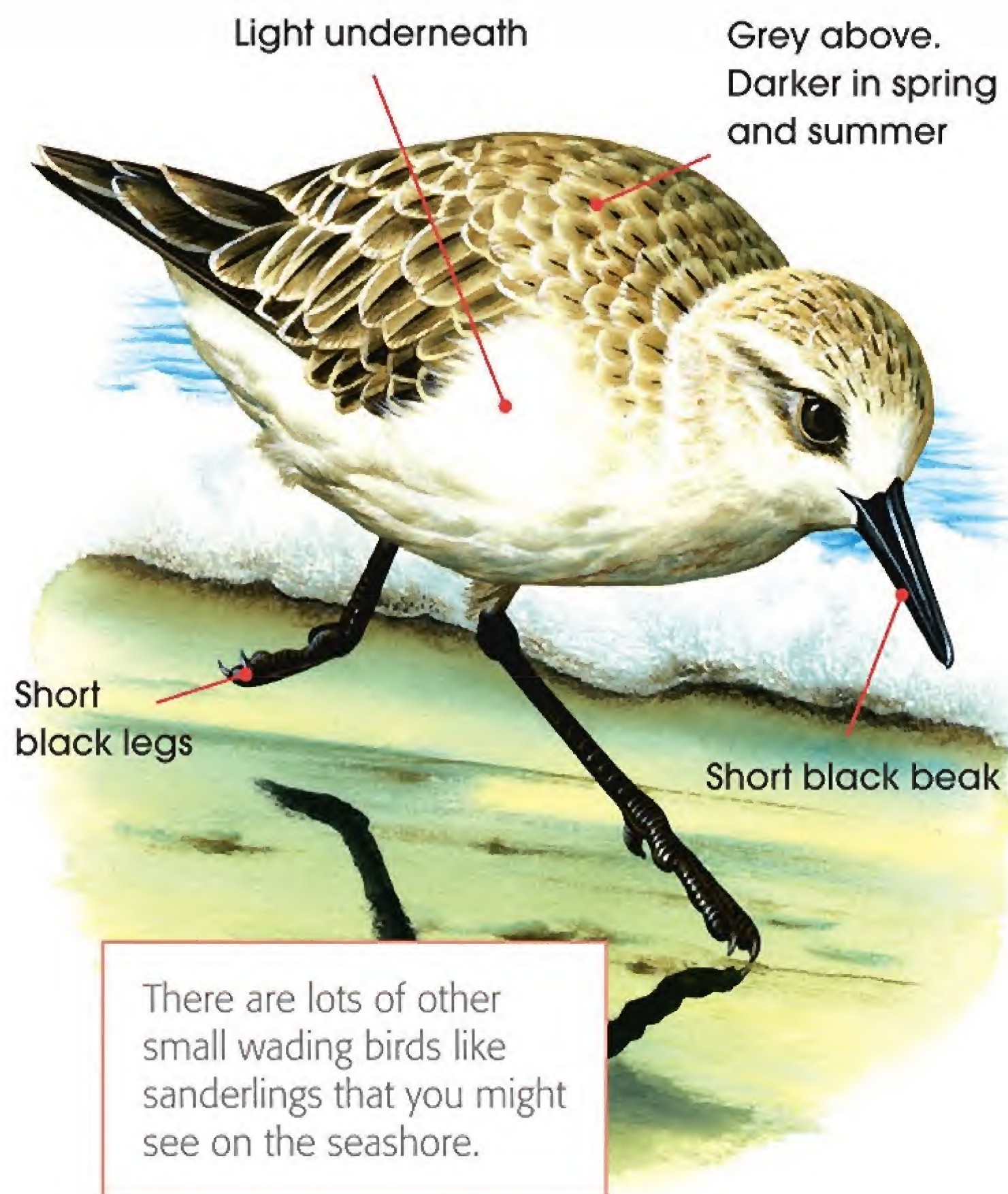
Long brown stalk





Sanderling

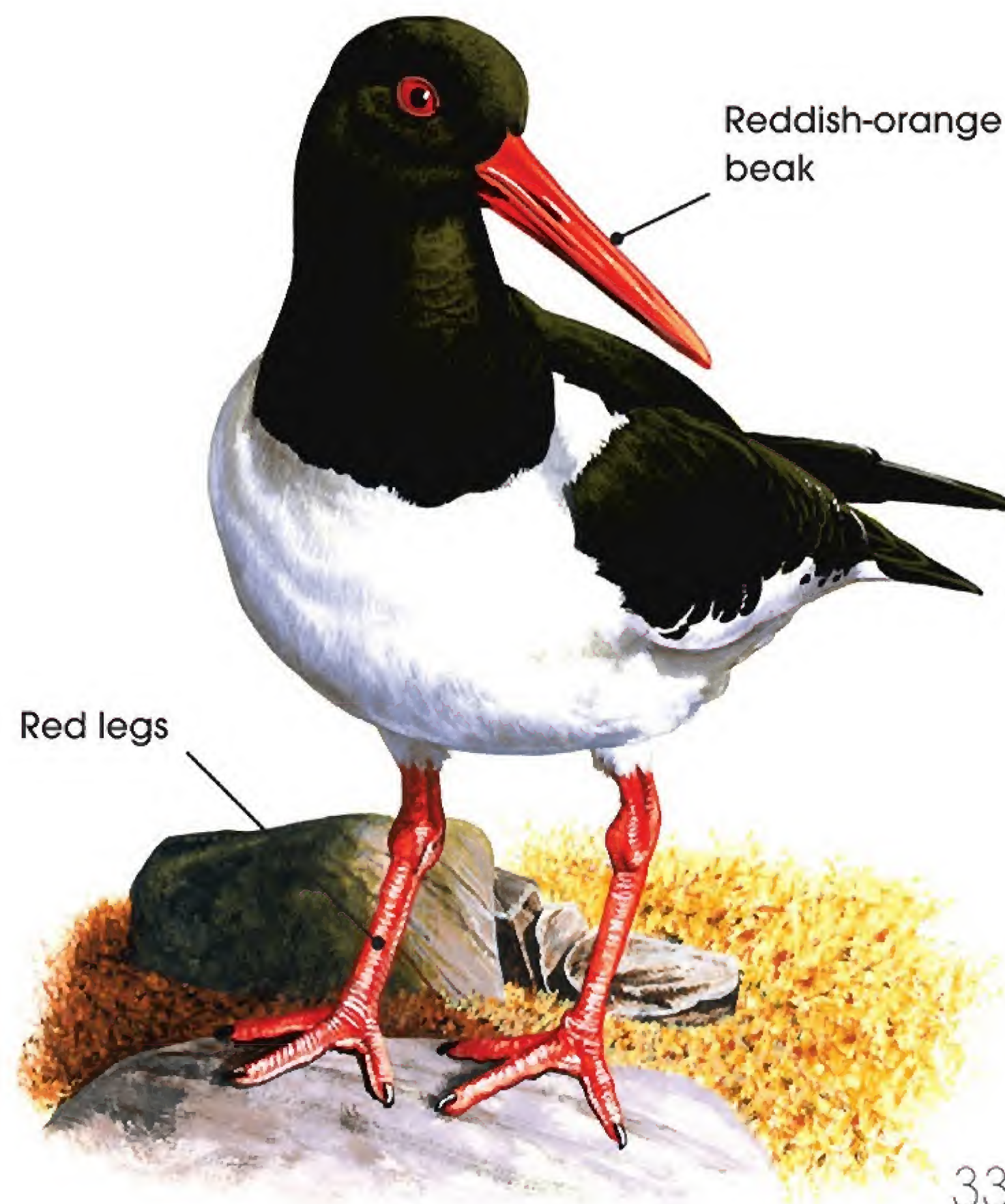
Have you seen little birds running very fast in front of the waves? They could be sanderlings. They stop for a moment to peck up a fly or a worm.



Oystercatcher

These black and white birds are looking for cockles and mussels to eat. They have bright red beaks and legs.

Oystercatchers make lots of loud peeping calls.





Chiton

When the tide is out, look on rocks for chitons (kye-tons). The pieces of their shell are stuck together like armour. When the tide is in, they move around the rocks, eating green algae off them.

If a chiton is washed off its rock by the sea, it rolls up into a ball.

Flat body on rock

Eight pieces make up the shell

Spines along edge

Mermaid's purse



You can sometimes find these on the beach. They are old egg cases made by dogfish or other fish called rays. The fish laid their eggs in them and their babies hatched inside.

Each mermaid's purse is the egg case for one baby fish.

Pointed at each corner

Four-sided

Hard like a fingernail

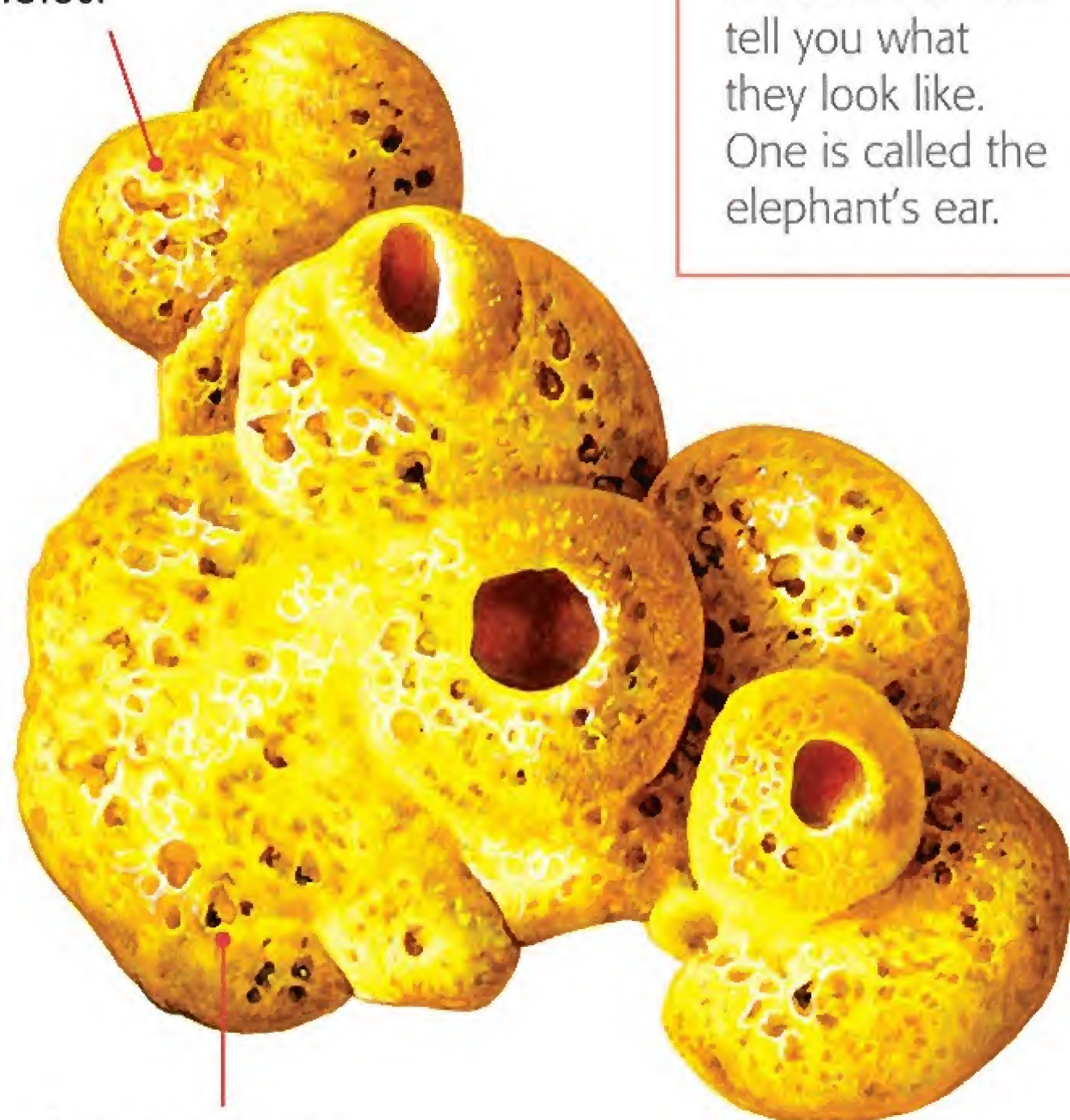


Sponge

Sponges are animals that come in all sorts of shapes, sizes and colours. Just like the plastic sponges in your bathroom or kitchen, they soak up water through tiny holes.

Dotted surface.
A sponge is full of holes.

Some sponges have names that tell you what they look like. One is called the elephant's ear.



Growing on rock



Common piddock

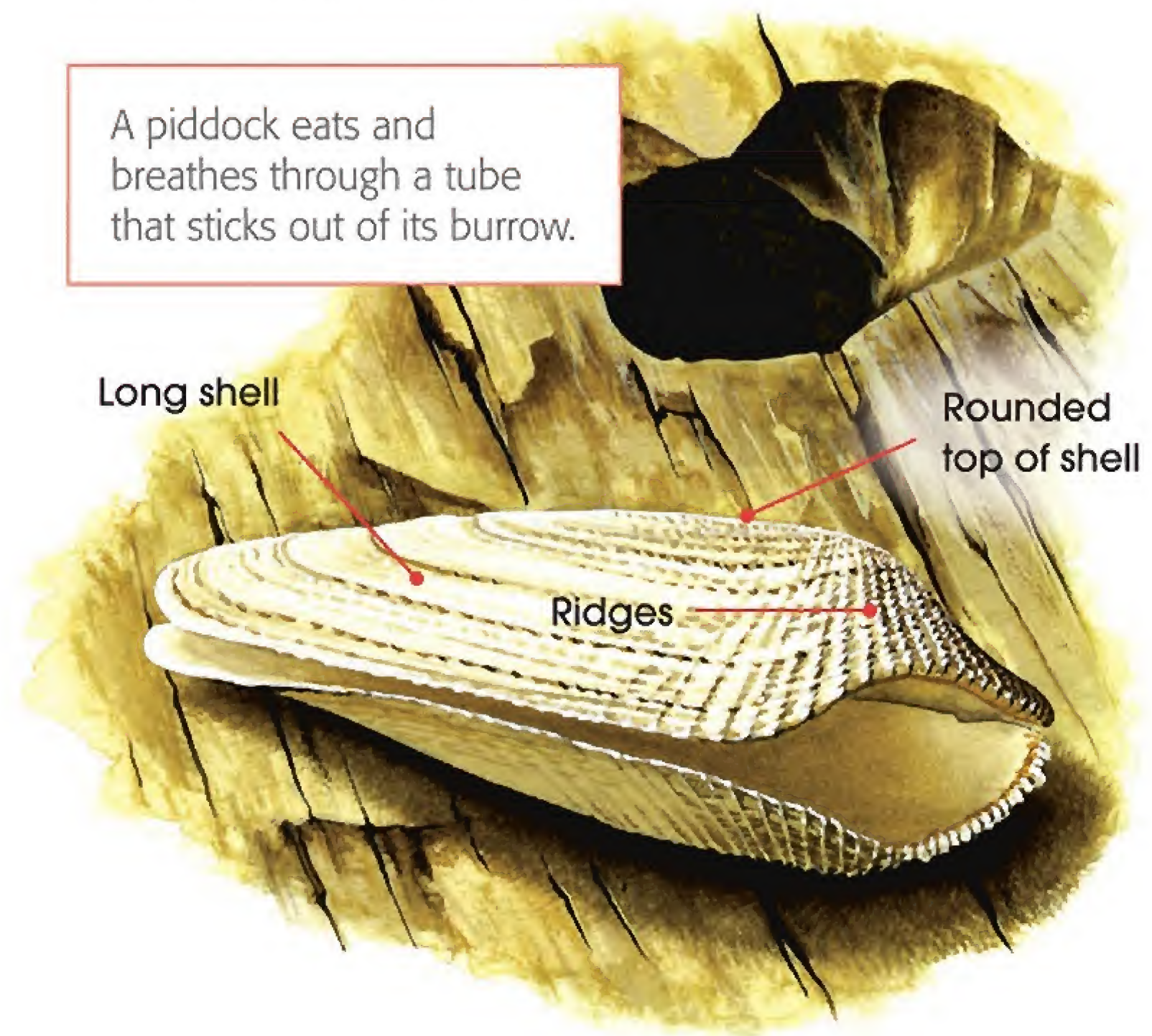
Look for a deep, round hole in a rock or a piece of driftwood. Maybe a piddock lived there. These animals use sharp bits on their shell to burrow into the rock. They stay there for the rest of their lives.

A piddock eats and breathes through a tube that sticks out of its burrow.

Long shell

Rounded top of shell

Ridges





Sea urchin

Look for a sea urchin in a rockpool. It eats seaweed. You might also find a hard, round, lumpy little ball on the beach. It is all that is left of a dead sea urchin.

One urchin looks like a vegetable and is called the sea potato. But you can't eat it!

Lumps where spines once grew

The round shell is the urchin's skeleton

Dots where sucker feet once grew



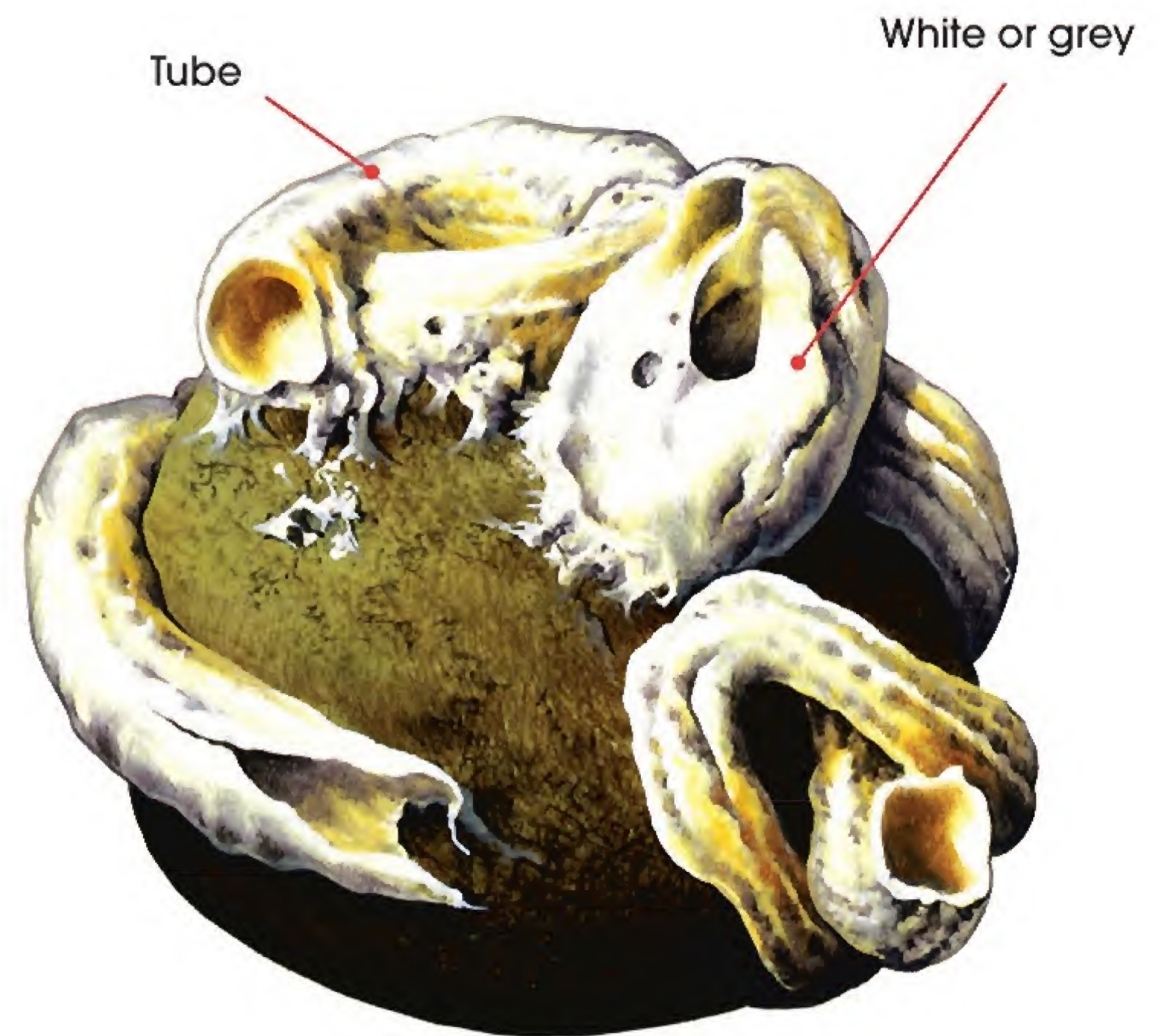
Prickly live urchin



Tubeworm

You might find thin shapes like bits of string on rocks. These hard tubes are made by this worm. It shoots out little tentacles to feed when the sea comes in.

Some tubeworms make tubes that look like shells on seaweed.





Razorshell

Look for a very long, thin shell on the beach. It is one half of a razorshell. A creature with a soft body once lived inside.

A razorshell can burrow faster into sand than a human can dig.

Shell can be straight or curved



Razorshell burrow

Useful words

dogfish small shark that swims at the bottom of the sea

driftwood wood floating on the surface of the sea or washed up onto the beach

dunes little hills of sand at the back of the beach

pincers front claws of a prawn, crab or lobster

shellfish sea animals that usually have a shell

shingle round pebbles or small stones that make up some beaches

strandline the place on the shore where the sea washes up shells, dead plants, pieces of wood and rubbish

Spotter's guide

How many of these creatures have you seen?



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